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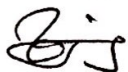
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# Rethinking Vivekananda through Space and Territorialised Spirituality, c. 1880-1920

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Fitzwilliam College  
September 2017



This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge.



## **Rethinking Vivekananda through Space and Territorialised Spirituality, c. 1880-1920**

This dissertation examines Vivekananda (1863 – 1902) as an itinerant monk rather than the nationalist ideologue he has become in recent scholarship. Historians have approached Vivekananda as either a pioneer of Hindu nationalism or as the voice of a universalist calling for service to humanity. Such labelling neglects the fact that he predominantly navigated between those polarised identities, and overlooks the incongruities between his actions and his ideas. By contextualising his travels within various scales of history, this dissertation puts Vivekananda's lived life in dialogue with his thought, as articulated in his correspondence and speeches.

It shows that purposeful movement characterised Vivekananda's life. Instead of searching for enlightenment, he travelled throughout the subcontinent as a wandering monk to territorialise spirituality. He carved out his own support base in Madras to reclaim the region from the Theosophical Society, and dwelled in native courts to accrue the patronage of native princes to build the Ramakrishna Math and Mission with him at the helm. His web of princely patronage also carried him to the Parliament of the World's Religions (World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893), as a representative of 'Hinduism' rather than a Hindu representative of a religious community or organisation. His rise to fame at the Parliament also unfolded through spatial dynamic. His performance triggered highly gendered and disordered spectacle, which starkly contrasted with the British Royal Commission's obsession with discipline at the main Exposition. Furthermore, his speeches painted an anti-colonial geography of fraternity, and instilled new malleable subjectivity in his western female followers. After his death, his life and ideas continued to challenge the colonial state's distinction between 'spirituality' and anarchism. Thus, Vivekananda territorialised spirituality in both India and America not only by travelling, but also by inhabiting the interstices of empire. By examining Vivekananda through space, this dissertation creates a new template for contextualising Vivekananda in national, imperial, and international histories, leading to new insights on the man, his ideas, and his legacy.

## Acknowledgement

This dissertation is the culmination of my journey through my 20s. It saw its beginning at Chennai where, in 2008, I sought a more meaningful summer than accumulating a line in my c.v. The summer of volunteer service instantly piqued my curiosity on India, which I sought to quench at the Johns Hopkins University under the guidance of Professor Veena Das. Our weekly conversation on Gandhi evolved into my larger intellectual interest in South Asia, which carried me across the Atlantic to the heart of Oriental Studies at Oxford, and finally to Cambridge.

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29 September 2017

Cambridge  
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## **Abbreviations**

CWSV – The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda

LSV – The Life of Swami Vivekananda

RSA – Royal Society of Arts

HC – House of Commons

BL – British Library

IOR – India Office Records

NAI – National Archives of India

NMML – Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

WBSA – West Bengal State Archive

IB – Intelligence Branch

## Glossary

*Aryavarta* – Land of Aryas

*Bhadralok* – Bengali gentleman

*Bhagavan* – Lord

*Bhakti* – Devotion

*Bharatvarsha* – India

*Dan* – Gift

*Darshan* – Auspicious sight

*Desh* – Land

*Faqir* – Sufi ascetic

*Gurubhais* – Brother monks

*Jnana* – Knowledge

*Kalapani* – ‘Black water’, taboo of crossing seas

*Khilat* – Robes of honour

*Khiraj* – Tribute

*Mahapurush* – Great man

*Mahatma* – Great soul

*Math* – Monastery

*Moksha* – Liberation

*Nizam* – Regional administrator or governor

*Parivrājaka* – Wandering monk

*Rajadharma* – Kingly conduct

*Rajas* – Princes

*Sadhana* – Spiritual practice

*Sadhu* – Holy man

*Samadhi* – Trance

*Sannyasi* – Hindu ascetic

*Seva* – Service to humanity

*Thikana* – Estate

*Vakil* – Lawyer

*Vallal* – A man of largess, of generosity



# INTRODUCTION

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Image 1. Swami Vivekananda in Chicago, ca. 1942 by H. Ganguly.<sup>1</sup>

This is Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), the ‘cyclonic Hindu monk’. The artist, H. Ganguly, who painted this roughly half a century after the production and circulation of the original photograph, successfully captures the crux of Vivekananda’s iconography. What came to be known as ‘the Chicago pose’ continues to perpetuate an image of a masculine Hindu ascetic, a national hero, and an internationally recognised spiritual guru. Christopher Pinney, a visual anthropologist and the owner of the painting, offers an interesting, though slightly short of

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<sup>1</sup> From Maria Antonella Pelizzari (ed.), *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2003), 61.

ground-breaking, interpretation. He suggests that the painting carries a ‘moral message’.<sup>2</sup> Vivekananda’s central position and dominating scale symbolise his ‘spiritual heights’, overpowering the skyscrapers that represent the apex of materialism.<sup>3</sup> According to Pinney, the painting says loud and clear; the Hindu monk ‘came and conquered a materialistic West’.<sup>4</sup>

While Pinney rightly suggests that precision is not the focus of the painting, a closer look reveals another message — that of movement. The concrete street separating the spiritual monk from the material West takes our gaze beyond his body, deeper into the forest of anachronistic high-rise buildings. Rather than ‘reveal[ing] a moral collision’, as Pinney puts it, the image shows us the distance Vivekananda travelled to reach the front of the frame. The painting, thus, not only encapsulates the moment involved in Vivekananda’s victory at the Parliament of the World’s Religions (Chicago, 1893), but it also hints at the journey of his rise to our view, ultimately *becoming* the painting.

This thesis explores the movements of Vivekananda in this process of becoming. Rather than trying to define Vivekananda in terms of binaries — was he a religious reformer or revivalist? was he a Hindu nationalist or a *sannyasi* (ascetic) of universalism? — it examines him within various contexts, territories, and stages on which he placed himself. Why did he leave Bengal? What is the significance of his attachment to Madras? What does the fact that the princes of small estates supported Vivekananda’s journey to the Parliament of the World’s Religions tell us about sovereignty and space in the British Raj? What new information does the arrival of an uninvited nobody to the international stage of the Parliament reveal about the nature of international events at the turn of the century? What role does regionalism within India play in making Vivekananda a national figure? To what extent did his death fuel revolutionary movements and institutionalisation of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission (the monastery for the Ramakrishna Order, and the philanthropic organisation affiliated to the former that Vivekananda established), and what does this tell us about the relationship between politics, spirituality, gender, and nationality? Ultimately, the thesis investigates the question, what factors *outside* and *beyond* religious nationalism make Vivekananda so tenacious a figure in India, and in other locations, such as Chicago, where his name continues to mark one of its main streets.

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Pinney, ‘Some Indian “Views of India”: The Ethics of Representation’, in *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900* ed. Maria Antonella Pelizzari (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2003), 266.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

In asking these questions, the thesis departs from existing scholarship. It takes Vivekananda less as a political or religious thinker, and more as an actor. It puts his ideas in dialogue with the different overlapping spaces he traversed, in order to unveil the mechanics of his *becoming*. Thus, while taking Vivekananda as the protagonist, the thesis pays equal attention to his surroundings and enablers. In short, it brings together scholarship from distinct fields for the first time, and paves new grounds in South Asian and transnational history.

### **Locating Vivekananda in Historiography**

This thesis argues that mobility characterised Vivekananda — his life, ideas, and even his spectre. First, Vivekananda was not a stationary recluse nor a *sadhu* (holy man) tethered to a temple or pilgrimage site. Like many of his contemporaries and predecessors, he left his hometown of Calcutta to ‘discover’ India and even crossed the *kalapani* (‘black water’) on numerous occasions. Although India lay at the heart of his mission, he spent most of his adult life abroad. He left Bengal in 1891, India in 1893, and returned to Bengal in 1897 only to leave once more in 1899, three years before his death. During the process of founding the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, he was mainly outside of the country. Although he would establish the Ramakrishna Math (monastery) headquarters after his return in 1897, with his success at the Parliament, he himself said that he had found ‘[his] “Math”, where [he] always returned to after [his] wanderings’ in America.<sup>5</sup> From the house of the Hale family where he stayed in Chicago, he began to delegate specific assignments to his lay devotees in Madras and his *gurubhais* (brother monks) in Bengal to build his organisation. After consecrating the Math at Belur in 1898, he once again left the country for the ‘West’, even attending the Paris Exposition of 1900.<sup>6</sup> Thus, his projects of formalising and expanding the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and creating its journals, mostly took shape while he was in transit.

His ideas reflected these changing circumstances. In fact, historians, regardless of their diverging views on the monk, are agreed on one thing: Vivekananda’s frequent self-contradiction. Although he promoted non-dualistic Advaita Vedanta in public, he confessed

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<sup>5</sup> Vivekananda to Swami Ramakrishnananda, 1894, Swami Vivekananda, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 87.

<sup>6</sup> Although the Math opened in January 1898, its official ceremony was held in December of 1897, and the rules and regulations were established in 1897.



his penchant for the worship of the Mother Goddess Kali in private.<sup>7</sup> While he presented Hinduism as a religion of tolerance to his foreign audience, he also narrated the history of *Aryavarta* (land of the Aryans), which highlighted the resilience of the ‘Hindus’ who survived their ‘alien’ conquerors.<sup>8</sup> He refused to engage with the issues of caste and women, categorising them as social problems rather than religious issues. When provoked, he delivered contradictory statements. He spoke about the ‘enviable position’ of the Hindu widows to the American female crowd at the Ramabai Circle, while emphasising the importance of improving the condition of Indian women to Haripada Mitra, one of his disciples.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, he harboured some peculiar ideas about women. He praised American women for being independent and well-educated, but also for being ‘pure and chaste’.<sup>10</sup> He also personally benefitted from both public and domestic roles of his female friends and hosts. After all, it was with the support of his female disciples from America and Britain that he managed to start the Vedanta Society in New York, and purchased the land to open the Belur Math in 1898.

Similarly, on the subject of caste, Vivekananda frequently changed his opinions. While observing the ‘benefits’ of the system as a division of labour, he lamented the social shackles that it presented to the individual. Combining caste with class, he referred to the tradition as ‘a tyranny’.<sup>11</sup> Once ‘born of a low caste... [one] is gone forever’, he explained.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, while he dedicated the Ramakrishna Math and Mission to the humanitarian ideals of *seva* (service to humanity), and claimed that the world was facing the age of the Shudras, his advice on caste improvement did not target Brahmins, but sought to elevate Shudras to the level of Brahmins.<sup>13</sup>

Vivekananda undoubtedly accommodated his ideas to suit his audience. However, the tailoring of his messages does not only indicate his performativity. It also signals his acute

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<sup>7</sup> Amiya P. Sen, *Explorations in Modern Bengal, c. 1800-1900: Essays on Religion, History, and Culture* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 97; Jyotirmaya Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion: Swami Vivekananda and the Making of Hindu Nationalism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), 11.

<sup>8</sup> Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion*, 154.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in Indira Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 134; also see, Tapan Raychaudhuri, ‘Swami Vivekananda’s Construction of Hinduism’, in *Swami Vivekananda and the Modernization of Hinduism*, ed. William Radice (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7; Vivekananda to Haripada, 28 December 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 61.

<sup>10</sup> Vivekananda to Haripada, 28 December 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 61; more on this irony, see Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History*, 131-135.

<sup>11</sup> Vivekananda to Haripada, 28 December 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 61.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 4 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), 243; Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion*, 171-174;

awareness of spatial differences. As Sumit Sarkar has pointed out, Vivekananda separated the public and private spheres to contest the ‘colonial slanders about a subject race’ in the public.<sup>14</sup> More importantly, Vivekananda, like his contemporaries, evoked the tropes of humoural ethics. In *Origins of Nationality in South Asia*, C. A. Bayly argued that the traditions of old patriotism — the critique of ethical governance with metaphors of humours and virtues specifically attached to the body and land — shaped many discourses of anti-colonial nationalism.<sup>15</sup> According to Bayly, the rhetoric of ‘good counsel, the charisma of land’ characteristic of old patriotism, also appeared in the ideas of Gandhi and Lajpat Rai.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Vivekananda dissected and attributed qualities to different regions. For example, he criticised Orissa for being ‘a land of cowards’, and Bengal for losing ‘all sense of manliness’.<sup>17</sup> As we will see in Chapter 1, he praised Madras against Bengal for its social efforts, and Western princes over their Southern counterparts for keeping their promises of patronage. Ultimately, these perspectives on regional differences, and what they could offer him, motivated Vivekananda to leave his motherland.

Mobility can also be seen in his afterlife. As Chapter 5 will show, Vivekananda’s reach expanded both spatially and temporally after his death. The Swadeshi movement and the increased political violence in Bengal transformed Vivekananda into an inspiration of anti-colonial nationalism. His Chicago speeches were translated and published in Bengali and Hindi from his Maths as early as 1903, and into Marathi by M. S. Golwalkar in the late 1930s.<sup>18</sup> By 1912, a decade after Vivekananda’s death, his writings were published and disseminated along with other political articles by Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale.<sup>19</sup> Bengali revolutionaries immediately incorporated Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Math into their pantheon, carrying the writings of the former, and using the latter as a sanctuary to evade police surveillance.<sup>20</sup> Vivekananda’s hypnotic national image has continued to be strengthened, and

<sup>14</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 352.

<sup>15</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Id., 121.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Sikata Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence, and Empire in India and Ireland, 1914-2004* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 59.

<sup>18</sup> On the Hindu right’s adaptation of Vivekananda, see Pralay Kanungo, ‘Attempts at Appropriation’, *Frontline* 30:2 (2013), <http://www.frontline.in/stories/20130208300201900.htm> (accessed 20 November 2013).

<sup>19</sup> See Swami Vivekananda, *Speeches and Writings of Swami Vivekananda. A Comprehensive Collection. With Four Portraits* (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1912). G.A. Natesan has also published Vivekananda’s work with other works by Paul Deussen, Max Müller, Annie Besant and Margaret Noble.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Ramakrishna Mission’. West Bengal State Archive, Intelligence Branch, SL.No. 41/1910, FL. No. 1078/1910.

he now towers over the iconography of the right-wing Hindutva movement. Whether in Narendra Modi's rhetoric or the posters of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, Vivekananda maintains a powerful public presence in contemporary Indian politics. However, if the recurrent appearance of the monk in the contemporary political campaigns has begun to solidify his image as a political icon of the Hindu right, his portraits hanging in multiple branches of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission continue to command reverence. In the United States of America, Vivekananda is more known as the founder of yoga, and a symbol of religious tolerance. Thus, over a century after his death, the spectre of Vivekananda haunts both spiritual and political realms within and outside the subcontinent, and has accrued many, often opposing, meaning.

Existing scholarship has reflected this elusiveness. A copious literature surrounds Vivekananda; however, the debate on the monk has yet to take off with full force. To borrow Gwilym Beckerlegge's conclusion in his recent overview of the historiography, 'over a century's scholarship centred on Vivekananda has indeed "fleshed" him out in strikingly different ways, but its findings in terms of understanding Vivekananda's goals and motivation and the influences that shaped his ideas are often contradictory.'<sup>21</sup> This thesis suggests three historiographical explanations to this problem.<sup>22</sup>

First, the focus on Hinduism since the late 1980s has largely dominated the trajectories of scholarship on Vivekananda. Following Wilhelm Halbfass' work, *India and Europe*, published in 1988, historians have tried to place Vivekananda's Hinduism in the longer genealogy of nineteenth century Hindu revivalism. Halbfass' work generated a series of discussions on Hinduism in relations to Orientalism, modernity, revivalism, practical Vedanta, and the question on the invention of Hinduism.<sup>23</sup> In these earlier works, Vivekananda

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<sup>21</sup> Gwilym Beckerlegge, 'Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) 150 Years on: Critical Studies of an Influential Hindu Guru', *Religion Compass* 7:10 (2013), 444-453.

<sup>22</sup> See Beckerlegge 'Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) 150 Years on' for more detailed historiographical review.

<sup>23</sup> Some scholars writing in the late twentieth century have argued that Hinduism was a European creation; Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988); Stephen Hay, (ed.), *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); David Smith, *Hinduism and Modernity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell publishing, 1983); Others contended that Hinduism was a combination of orientalist interpretation and Indian nationalist response to, and participation in, the colonial making of Hinduism, see John Hawley, 'Naming Hinduism', *The Wilson Quarterly* 15: 3 (1991), 20-34; On the other end of this debate, scholars such as J. Laine ascribed the authorship of Hinduism solely to Indians, see J. Laine, 'The Notion of "Scripture" in Modern Indian Thought', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 64:1/4 (1983): 165-79; For more recent and nuanced observation, see David N. Lorenzen, *Who Invented Hinduism?: Essays on Religion in History* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006); Julius J. Lipner, 'The Rise of "Hinduism": Or, How to Invent a World

predominantly featured as part of this larger genealogy. Concomitantly, the discursive framework surrounding Hinduism has limited our understanding of Vivekananda, as it confined him within the binary of revivalism and modernisation.

Indeed, the juggernaut of Hinduism has largely structured historians' interpretation of the monk. This appears most conspicuously in William Radice's edited volume, *Swami Vivekananda and the Modernisation of Hinduism*.<sup>24</sup> Published in 1998 in response to the Hindu fundamentalists' increasing appropriation of Vivekananda, the book analyses Vivekananda's ideas from wide ranging perspectives. It includes contributions by Vasudha Dalmia, Susan Bayly, and William Pinch, who discuss different aspects of Hinduism, in addition to Kenneth Jones' comparative study on *sadharan dharma*, and Julius Lipner's analysis on Vivekananda's influence on Brahmabandhab Upadhyay. While every piece offers interesting research, and underlines the wide-ranging reach of the monk, the book leaves the reader questioning the usefulness of the chosen conceptual frame, 'modernisation'.

A second body of scholarship focuses on one specific region — Bengal. Given that Vivekananda was a Bengali, who sought to penetrate society by establishing the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math in that region, contextualising the monk within his own milieu is no doubt necessary. In fact, this focus has generated diverse debates. Tapan Raychaudhuri in *Europe Re-Considered*, has combined intellectual history with biography to present Vivekananda alongside two other eminent Bengali intellectuals, Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya.<sup>25</sup> Raychaudhuri has highlighted the image of Vivekananda as a liberal Hindu *sannyasi*, challenging the VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad)'s appropriation of Vivekananda. While Raychaudhuri consciously moulded Vivekananda into a tolerant and sincere Hindu ascetic, Amiya P. Sen in his *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal* lays bare Vivekananda's attraction to both universalistic Vedanta and to the glorious Hindu past. In this important work, Sen concludes that Vivekananda cannot be reduced to a single label.<sup>26</sup>

The Bengal context has also produced a series of detailed comparisons between Vivekananda and his guru, Ramakrishna. From Narasingha P. Sil and Jeffrey Kripal's

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Religion with Only Moderate Success', *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10:1 (2006), 91–104; Andrew J. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> William Radice, (ed.), *Swami Vivekananda and the Modernization of Hinduism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> Amiya P. Sen, *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 320-346.

sexualisation of Vivekananda, and eroticisation of Ramakrishna to Jyotirmaya Sharma's emphasis on Vivekananda's 'purposeful distortion' of Ramakrishna, the question of the extent to which Vivekananda deviated from Ramakrishna has generated much discussion. Hinduism, gender, and nationalism also figure in these debates.<sup>27</sup>

On the question of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Beckerlegge has made a significant contribution. From exploring the origins of the organisation's idea of *seva*, the differences between Indian and foreign branches (mainly American and British), to the Math's representation of Vivekananda, Beckerlegge has opened up a variety of topics on Vivekananda's organisation that expanded beyond Bengal.<sup>28</sup> However, despite the fact that the Math came under colonial surveillance during the sensitive period of 1908-1918, Beckerlegge has remained silent about this issue.

In both these approaches, historians express a certain discomfort with Vivekananda's transgressions, particularly those embraced by Hindu nationalists. Despite Vivekananda's constant appearance in fundamentalist literature, he rarely features in the history of anti-colonial nationalism. Christophe Jaffrelot in his study on 'strategic syncretism' of ethnic nationalism chose to omit Vivekananda, as the latter did not directly contribute to 'institutionali[sing] socio-political associations' unlike Dayananda Saraswati of the Arya Samaj.<sup>29</sup> Scholars of anti-colonial revolutionaries, such as Peter Heehs and Shukla Sanyal, while mentioning Vivekananda as a source of inspiration, have not teased out the political role of the monk. Similarly, following Vivekananda's declaration against politics, Radice and Raychaudhuri have asserted that the depiction of Vivekananda as a 'Hindu revivalist, fundamentalist or communalist grossly contradicts the evidence', and have dedicated their book as a project to 'rescue [Vivekananda's social and religious ideals] from the distortions [of the Hindu Right]'.<sup>30</sup> Sarkar has also remarked that the image of Vivekananda as a 'patriot-prophet' is a misleading concoction by Vivekananda's Irish disciple, Sister Nivedita.<sup>31</sup>

If the majority of scholars have tried to avoid the politicisation of Vivekananda by calling historical evidence to the fore, since 2003, Jyotirmaya Sharma has been addressing the

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<sup>27</sup> Narasingha P. Sil, 'The Swami and the Sister', *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter* XXXII (November 2003); Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion*, 95.

<sup>28</sup> John Zavos (ed.), *Public Hinduisms* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2012), 3-21.

<sup>29</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, *Religion, Caste and Politics in India* (London: C. Hurst, 2011), 24.

<sup>30</sup> Radice (ed.), *Swami Vivekananda*, vii.

<sup>31</sup> Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 353. Indira Chowdhury has analysed Vivekananda's political aspects through gender. See, Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History*, 120-149.

same issue from the opposite perspective. Immersed in the contemporary dilemma surrounding Vivekananda, Sharma insists on removing the ‘distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva’.<sup>32</sup> Opposing Radice and Raychaudhuri, Sharma ‘rejects the claim that Hindu nationalists have appropriated Vivekananda’s ideas to push their dark and diabolical political agenda’.<sup>33</sup> Instead, he has been moulding Vivekananda into a paterfamilias of Hindutva.<sup>34</sup>

The question of how ‘political’ Vivekananda was is important. However, Sharma’s projects present more problems than they solve. His deployment of Hindutva is anachronistic: his conviction of the necessity, and presumed superiority, of Vivekananda’s political theory runs the risk of taking Vivekananda out of his time and his places. Sharma states:

[when] we examine his thought, [Vivekananda] emerges as a proponent of a strong, virile and militant ideal of the Hindu nation. (This is not an attempt to question his motives. Rather, it is to illustrate the fragility of his notions like tolerance and unity of all faiths). More importantly, it is to show the sad trajectory of a lot of nineteenth and twentieth century Indian thought: its inability to transcend context and history to carve out an alternative universe, a new metaphysics.<sup>35</sup>

To begin with, Vivekananda is not the best historical figure from whom to draw a consistent political theory. He did not have a set canon, nor did he espouse clear principles. He was not a systematic thinker. The very fact of Vivekananda’s vacillation of thought only highlights the importance of his context. Complicating Vivekananda’s ideas on universalism certainly can offer us a more holistic picture of the monk and Hinduism of the fin-de-siècle. However, we cannot simply, for the sake of creating an intellectual history on the figure, neglect existing scholarship. After all, the fragility of his ideas was caused precisely by Vivekananda’s ‘context and history’. The brittleness of his liberal notions does not signify the feigned universalism of an inherently Hindu nationalist. Rather, it shows an attempt at creating a new geography and subjectivity highly reflective of his time. Furthermore, it may also reflect Vivekananda’s genuine torment at being both a *sannyasi* and a leader of a new organisation. Thus, Sharma’s selective analysis of Vivekananda only accentuates the disjuncture between the monk’s thought and action, and fails to bring them together.

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<sup>32</sup> Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion*, xiv-xv.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion*; Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Viking, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Sharma, *Hindutva*, 74.

The stark contrast between historians' conspicuous discomfort with politicising the spiritual man, and Sharma's embracing of political Vivekananda, rises from the lack of consideration of the various *layers* and scales of spaces he moved through and inhabited. Rather than being overwhelmed by the 'nation' or denying either aspects of fundamentalism or of universalism, it is only by contextualising and combining Vivekananda's thoughts with his movement, and the spaces that he traversed, that we can get a fuller picture of Vivekananda and the peculiarities of his time. After all, Vivekananda began to emerge to the surface on very particular settings in late-colonial India and at the international event of the Parliament.

'Rethinking Vivekananda through Space and Territorialisated Spirituality, c. 1880-1920' undertakes this task. Taking the importance of spatiality in Vivekananda's life and thoughts seriously, the thesis analyses the layers of different spaces that Vivekananda traversed. It begins in 1880, in the early days of Vivekananda's encounter with Ramakrishna in Bengal, and follows Vivekananda's journey to Chicago. It ends back in India roughly two decades after his death, in 1920.

This time frame has been chosen for two reasons. The first has to do with the availability of sources. The intelligence files on Vivekananda at the West Bengal State Archive only cover the period 1908 and 1918, because the police did not conduct much investigation into Vivekananda until he became a national force in his afterlife. With the Swadeshi movement, and the concomitant rise of revolutionary activities, the spectre of Vivekananda caught the attention of the colonial authorities. Thus, as the thesis unfolds both chronologically and spatially, the last chapter examines the effect of Vivekananda's ghost in colonial surveillance and anxiety.

Second, Vivekananda's life provides an example of what Bayly has defined as the 'idealist moment', a period between 1880 to 1914, during which affiliations to both national and supranational communities replaced individualism and created what Leela Gandhi has termed 'affective communities'.<sup>36</sup> While according to Bayly's time frame, the idealist moment ended in 1914, the thesis shows that its residue remained strong into the 1920s. Thus, the thesis tries to capture the characteristic of this period and its *nachlass* in the final chapter.

Each chapter adopts a different spatial-analytical framework. The thesis does not simply discuss Vivekananda's destinations, but investigates the social milieus that he sought, and the various dynamics — from spectacle and discursive brotherhood to malleable belonging

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<sup>36</sup> Chris Bayly, 'Making Hinduism a Public and a World Religion, c. 1800 to the Present', (Unpublished article, 2014).

— that Vivekananda generated within these spaces. Thus, in its approach, the thesis presents national, transnational, and international perspectives on Vivekananda and on the spaces that made him and were created by him. In so doing, the thesis provides an example of the approach to global history that Sebastian Conrad and Kenneth Pomeranz have recently emphasised.<sup>37</sup> Writing global history is not to do away with the nation. Rather, as Conrad and Pomeranz assert, global history requires the application of different scales of spaces — local, national, transnational, and global. In its constant weaving between various scales as it follows Vivekananda, and in its analyses of the layers of spaces, the thesis seeks to present an approach to writing ‘global’ history.

This methodology has also opened up new conversations between Vivekananda and a wide range of scholars. The thesis places scholars of exhibitions such as Tony Bennett and Timothy Mitchell in conversation with those of internationalism like Prasenjit Duara, along with experts on sovereignty like Lauren Benton.<sup>38</sup> It also places Mitchell alongside Leela Gandhi, and Pamela Price with Peter Van der Veer. Thus, the strength of the thesis lies in the hitherto unanticipated analytical engagements, and combination of original sources with a variety of interdisciplinary secondary literature.

The thesis also bases itself on extensive archival research in India and the British Library. Some of the Hindi materials were found in the Nagri Pracharini Sabha in Varanasi, while files on the transnational alliances between princes and American ambassadors examined in Chapter 2 originate from the National Archive of India in Delhi. Chapter 2 and 3 benefitted from the materials at the Royal Society of Arts in London. With this material combined with the files from the British Library, Chapter 2 unveils the hitherto untold story of the British Royal Commission and the Indian Pavilion at the World’s Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893). Similarly, Chapter 5 examines the narrative of the police records on the Ramakrishna Math and Mission for the first time. This archival research is supplemented by voluminous published records on Vivekananda’s life, lectures, and letters, which are complemented by further research into princely states, expositions, the Parliament, spectacles, and police surveillance.

In writing this thesis, I faced limitations, not least my weak grasp of Bengali. The institutional dominance of the Ramakrishna Math and the fact that it does not allow visitors to

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<sup>37</sup> Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Kenneth Pomeranz, ‘Histories for a Less National Age’, *American Historical Review* 119:1 (2014), 1–22.

<sup>38</sup> Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991).



view its archive posed another problem. However, the thesis hopes to show that these limitations can be overcome to a degree, by using novel frameworks. Indeed, looking at spaces allows us to resist Sharma's conscious conflation of 'Hindus' with 'India', and 'the West... more often than not, [as] a seamless, undifferentiated category'.<sup>39</sup> Instead, the thesis sharpens the different regional, territorial dynamics that Vivekananda produced and which, in turn, shaped the monk. As it will be shown, Vivekananda's politics and aspirations unfolded through various layers of spaces and contentions therein. Thus, if according to Sharma's most recent interview with the Toynbee Prize Foundation, 'the rise of Hindu nationalism ... has to be explained in terms of the politics of the accretion of Hindu identity and its political uses', the thesis points towards a new paradigm that embeds ideas in space — distinct from political thought — that reveals both the political aspects of Vivekananda and the cascade of political dynamics triggered by Vivekananda.<sup>40</sup> It is by using these novel methods, we will be able to see with fresh eyes the multiple dimensions and interlocking forces involved in the emergence of Vivekananda.

## Chapter Itinerary

Since the thesis is about movement, in its structure it progresses from one location and scale to another. Each chapter analyses Vivekananda's actions, his words, and their impact within a given context.

Chapter 1, 'From Narendranath to Vivekananda: *Parivrājaka* and the Geography of Spirituality', examines Vivekananda before he became the famous 'cyclonic Hindu monk'. By following his itinerary during his *parivrājaka* (wandering monk) phase between 1888 and 1893, the chapter challenges the romanticised narrative that surrounds Vivekananda's early years. Rather than focusing on his exposure to poverty as scholars have done, the chapter takes the triad of journey, space, and the self to uncover the social spaces that Vivekananda sought out, the patrons he acquired, and his concomitant transformation from Narendranath of Bengal to Vivekananda of India.

The thesis then follows him to Chicago. Chapter 2, 3, and 4 place, for the first time, the Parliament of the World's Religions and the World's Columbian Exposition on the same

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<sup>39</sup> Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion*, 132.

<sup>40</sup> Nagothu Naresh Kumar, 'Dissecting Hindutva: A Conversation with Jyotirmaya Sharma', *Toynbee Prize Foundation*, <http://toynbeeprize.org/interviews/dissecting-hindutva-a-conversation-with-professor-jyotirmaya-sharma/> (accessed 30 June 2017).

analytical platform. In order to contextualise and examine the significance of Vivekananda's arrival at the Parliament, Vivekananda takes the back seat in Chapter 2. Instead, the chapter explores the importance of national representation at international events. By analysing the spaces of Indian representation — the Indian Pavilion at the Exposition, and Hinduism, as presented by Vivekananda, at the Parliament — the chapter reveals the ways *rajās* (princes) of both large and small princely states circumvented the colonial state and occupied Chicago to build an image of the Indian 'nation'. As the chapter uncovers the hitherto untold story of the Indian Pavilion and Vivekananda's princely patrons, it throws fresh light on the quasi-sovereignty of Indian princes and demonstrates the importance of religion, kingship, and international expositions in the history of internationalism.

Chapter 3 looks squarely at the geography of 'universal brotherhood' propagated at the Parliament of the World's Religions. It dismantles the existing scholarship's portrayal of the Parliament's monolithic brotherhood — whether a Christian imperial or a moment of East-West encounter. By navigating the international and national discursive spaces, the chapter shows how the Indian representatives and Vivekananda created fractured fraternities and multiple kinds of brotherhood at the Parliament.

Chapter 4 investigates the process of Vivekananda's 'cyclonic' transformation, by using space and spectacle as a new window to observe the making of the international sensation. To heighten the peculiar spectacle that Vivekananda triggered, the chapter juxtaposes the Parliament with the British Royal Commission's management of space at the Exposition. In so doing, the chapter offers an original take on the Parliament and the Exposition, while offering new insight into the factors that empowered Vivekananda at the international event.

After the tour of the Parliament and the Exposition, the thesis returns to India and poses two questions: How was Vivekananda perceived within India years after the Parliament? Given his international fame and extensive mobility, how did the colonial state react to the monk? In seeking to answer these questions, Chapter 5 narrates the less-known story of Vivekananda's return to the subcontinent in 1897, and the 'national' impact of his death. Through a close analysis of intelligence files on the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, the chapter focuses on the ways the continued and pervasive appearances of Vivekananda's ghost both nationalised the monk posthumously, and perturbed the colonial state.

Momentarily taking Vivekananda out of the framework of the 'nation', and moving with him through space and time allow us to see the highly contested, untamed, and gendered spatial dynamics that the 'national' framework elides. The thesis shows that Vivekananda

became the figure we know now by traversing different layers and scales of space, by forging relationships both regional and transnational, and by inhabiting the interstices of the empire. Each chapter will peel away a new surface to show the process through which Vivekananda emerged on princely, national, and international platform, and finally, into our view.

# CHAPTER ONE

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## FROM NARENDRANATH TO VIVEKANANDA: *PARIVRĀJAK* AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF SPIRITUALITY

In February 1897, Indian newspapers in Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta reported on the same event — the return of Vivekananda from America.<sup>1</sup> The press had already discussed his performance at the Parliament of the World's Religions (Chicago, 1893), some with praise and others with criticism.<sup>2</sup> As such, by the time of his return, Vivekananda had become a widely-recognised name, and the monk's arrival in Madras evoked great public interest. One specific incident, the ceremony that marked his entrance to the subcontinent, attracted particular attention.

Hosted by the Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskara Sethupathi, and other eminent figures of Madras including Justice S. Subramania Iyer, the event honoured Vivekananda's success at the Parliament. Meticulously planned, each step of the ceremony bore important meaning. Despite having already arrived at the pier, Vivekananda and his party had to follow official instructions and remain on board until the arrival of the Raja. As the *Indian Mirror* remarked in some detail:

Punctual to the hour, the Rajah arrived in a nice, neatly decorated bo[at], specially prepared for the occasion, and reached the vessel in which Swami Vivekananda was, and landed him amidst much acclamation. At the landing place, there was a grand pandal erected, and a temporary jetty was put up, an immense crowd having gathered there. Swami Vivekananda was conducted to a beautiful platform in the pandal by the Rajah, who, after delivering a speech of welcome, asked Mr. Nagalinga Pillai, Agent, CSS.Co. to read the

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<sup>1</sup> These newspapers included: *The Indian Mirror*, *The Hindu*, *The Indian Times*. See Sankari Prasad Basu and Sunil Bihari Ghosh, (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers, 1893-1902* (Calcutta: Basu Bhattacharyya, 1969), 123, 130, 133-136, 241-242, 289, 293, 413-414, 581, 661-662, 691, 696-699.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the criticisms came from *The Indian Mirror* and the *Indian Social Reformer*. Chapter 4 will discuss these in detail.

address of welcome on behalf of the public. That being done, Swami Vivekananda made a suitable reply, the whole of which was taken down in short-hand by the reporters of the Madras and Madura newspapers. Then a grand procession was formed, and the landau, on which the Swamy and party were seated, was drawn by men, the Rajah of Ramnad being the foremost, and marched to the bungalow belonging to the Rajah, which was intended for the residence of the Swamy.... By the order of the Rajah, a tower of about 40 feet is to be erected on the place where the Swami first put his sacred foot on the soil of His Highness territory, and a slab to be affixed to the same.... Great enthusiasm prevails here about the visit of the Swami.<sup>3</sup>

From the Raja's special boat to his commanding of a tower, the ceremony rendered Vivekananda's arrival into a historic moment, an event to be memorialised. Vivekananda's marking of 'the soil of His Highness territory' and the 'address of welcome [made] on behalf of the public' also indicated his transformation from the elusive *sannyasi* (Hindu mendicant), who went by the name of Vividishananda or Satchidananda, into the national figure, Swami Vivekananda. One specific scene would have particularly struck the audience — the Raja leading the procession not seated on the landau, but engaged in the physical labour of pulling it. Many newspapers reporting on the event did not miss this clear inversion of power, depicting the Raja as a child and Vivekananda as a king.<sup>4</sup>

The Raja who arranged the ceremony was acutely aware of the significance of his performance. As Pamela Price has shown, despite the small size of the estate and its precarious relationship with the colonial state, Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi of Ramnad continued 'to play the king'.<sup>5</sup> He practiced *rajadharma* (kingly conduct) by acting as a *vallal* (a man of largess, of generosity), while also catering to the growing sentiment of the public in the Madras Presidency.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in addition to bestowing gifts and employing tropes of honour, the performance of rituals and mobilisation of public opinion remained at the crux of Sethupathi's project of legitimising his kingship.<sup>7</sup>

Given the importance of kingly performance and the public sphere in Sethupathi's governance, the grand spectacle of Vivekananda's reception raises many questions. How did a

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<sup>3</sup> 'Swami Vivekananda at Pamban', *The Indian Mirror*, 30 January 1897, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 133-134.

<sup>4</sup> *The Madras Mail*, 4 February 1897, Id., 698-99; *Indian Nation* cited in the *Indian Mirror*, 24 February 1897, Id., 156.

<sup>5</sup> S. Tiruvenkatachari, *Sethupatis of Ramnad* (Karaikudi-3: 1959), 76 cited in Pamela Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 161.

<sup>6</sup> Id., Xvi. For a broader description of *rajadharma* as practiced by native princes, see Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4-5, 67.

<sup>7</sup> See Price, *Kingship and Political Practice*, 161-188.

Bengali monk and a native prince of the small southern estate of Ramnad forge a relationship that they both celebrated publicly? What did this inversion of hierarchy signify? What role did the Raja play in Narendranath's transition to Vivekananda before he left for America?

The origins of this largely forgotten event and the overlooked relationship lay in the period between 1888 and 1893, when Vivekananda embarked on a journey around the subcontinent as a *parivrājaka* (wandering monk). Two years following Ramakrishna's death, Vivekananda, then known by his monastic name Vividishanada, left Bengal under the identity of a *parivrājaka*. Initially accompanied by his *gurubhais* (brother monks), he was forced to return to Bengal twice: due to his health problems in 1888 and the death of the Math's benefactors in 1890. Then he left again in 1891, this time emphasising the need to be on his own, only returning to Bengal in 1897. In this second phase, Vivekananda deviated from the route he had taken with his *gurubhais*, and spent most of his time in western and southern India. It was here that he encountered Sethupathi as well as other native princes, such as the Maharaja of Mysore, Chamarajendra Wodeyar X. With the patronage of native kings, Vividishanada, who by the end of 1893 had adopted the name Vivekananda, left Bombay for America.

Despite this chronological significance and distinct differences in itineraries, a cloud of ambiguity surrounds Vivekananda's life as a *parivrājaka*. This is partly due to the lack of sources. Only scraps of his correspondence and reminiscences of those whom he encountered remain to guide us through Vivekananda's journeys before he became the famous 'Hindu cyclone' in Chicago. But more significantly, the ambiguity of his identity as a wandering monk has been discounted by a certain romanticisation of the period. Official scholars of the Ramakrishna Math and historians writing from the 1980s to the early 2000s, such as Tapan Raychaudhuri, Amiya Sen, and Gwilym Beckerlegge, have portrayed this phase of Vivekananda's life as pivotal in sowing the seeds of his dedication to *seva* (service to humanity).<sup>8</sup> Raychaudhuri asserts that Vivekananda's empathy for the poor was inspired not by the direct experience of hunger he endured in the early stages of the Ramakrishna Order, but by his 'discovery' of India combined with his 'intensely emotional temperament' and 'great

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<sup>8</sup> For official publications see, Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda* vol.1-2 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1913) (Henceforth, LSV); Romain Rolland, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957); Mahendranath Gupta, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1980). Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); Amiya P. Sen, *Swami Vivekananda* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Gwilym Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission: The Making of a Modern Hindu Movement* (New Delhi: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Beckerlegge, *Swami Vivekananda's Legacy of Service* (New Delhi: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

pride in India's civilization'.<sup>9</sup> Beckerlegge has similarly argued that although Vivekananda's mission for his organisation changed significantly in America, his exposure to the poverty-stricken condition of the subcontinent left an imprint for his later ideas.<sup>10</sup> Departing from these trends, Rajagopal Chattopadhyaya, in his meticulously researched biography of Vivekananda, has debunked the extent of Vivekananda's mingling with the so-called 'poor'.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Chattopadhyaya has identified the hosts during Vivekananda's wandering years as predominantly *bhadraloks* (Bengali gentlemen), dewans, and native princes.<sup>12</sup> However, despite this important discovery, Chattopadhyaya does not probe the implications of the networks that opened the door to both Presidencies and princely states.

The romanticisation of Vivekananda's lone journey across the subcontinent has concomitantly contained his *parivrājaka* identity as a distinct phase of his life. Though convenient, this bracketing of Vivekananda's *parivrājaka* phase leaves many questions open. If, as Beckerlegge has emphasised, Vivekananda did not harbour an immediate mission throughout his years as a *parivrājaka*, what propelled him to leave his brother monks, particularly at the pivotal moment following Ramakrishna's death when the Order needed strong new leadership? If he finalised his decision to depart for America only at the end of 1893, how did his five years of travel across India contribute to this process of confirming his desire to leave for the West? Furthermore, how do we explain his choice to return to his *gurubhais* only *after* his successful campaigns in America and Britain? Given the historical context of late colonial India, can we brush aside his engagement with the Raja of Ramnad and nationalist figures he encountered on his journey to what turned out to be the 'other West', America?

In order to address these questions, we have to re-examine this period, as well as the concept of '*parivrājaka*', in a fresh light. This chapter offers an alternative approach, by viewing the *parivrājaka* phase as a spatial framework of analysis, rather than as a mere marker of identity. Drawing on Sumit Sarkar's social history of Ramakrishna in Bengal, it examines the social and political spaces within which Vivekananda moved.<sup>13</sup> It contextualises his wandering in each region and examines the various networks that carried him deeper into the subcontinent. For

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<sup>9</sup> Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered*, 251.

<sup>10</sup> Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission*, 51-61.

<sup>11</sup> Rajagopal Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda in India: A Corrective Biography* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 119, 122, 125.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed study on Vivekananda's *parivrājaka* phase, see Id., 80-133.

<sup>13</sup> Sumit Sarkar, 'Kaliyuga, Chakri and Bhakti: Ramakrishna and His Times', in *Writing Social History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 282-357.

Vivekananda, the *parivrājaka* phase was not a search for inspiration for *seva*, or a journey of spiritual development, as it was for many other spiritual figures.<sup>14</sup> Rather, the chapter argues, Vivekananda's *parivrājaka* years were his road to empowerment. They also reveal his strategy of territorialisation of spirituality.

The idea of *parivrājaka* provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the triad of journey, space, and the self in Vivekananda's life and thought. *Parivrājaka*, derived from Sanskrit, refers to wandering ascetics, whose footsteps seek no set destination apart from spiritual enlightenment. A *parivrājaka* sheds his worldly affiliations, depends on alms for survival, and visits holy sites of pilgrimage. This journey is both physical, unfolding through space, and spiritual: the *parivrājaka*'s self-training and self-discipline ultimately lead him to *moksha* or liberation. It was only through his own wanderings that Mool Shankar became Dayananda Saraswati, and Narendranath became Vivekananda. In the case of Ramakrishna, who never left Bengal, Sarkar has suggested that 'the flow of sannyasis through Dakshineswar' served as 'a substitute' for his *parivrājaka* phase.<sup>15</sup> Due to this transformative significance, the '*parivrājaka*' phase often features in the biographies of spiritual figures and the political journeys of many nationalist leaders, albeit more as a conceptual and metaphorical allegory.<sup>16</sup>

The wider salience of the act of ascetic wandering appears even in the Bengali language, Vivekananda's mother tongue. In Hindi-English dictionaries, the words '*parivrāj*', and '*parivrājaka*' refer to 'a religious wanderer, an ascetic', or simply 'a wandering ascetic'.<sup>17</sup> Its variant, '*parivrajyā*' describes a 'recluse', someone 'leading the life of a hermit', and also denotes a sense of asceticism.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the Hindi words that predominantly carry hermitic connotations, the Bengali variant of the word refers to both a traveller and a wandering ascetic.<sup>19</sup> According to a Bengali-English dictionary published in 1976, its derivative, '*parivrajan*', broadly describes the act of travelling rather than a spiritual quest.<sup>20</sup> As such, the

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<sup>14</sup> See for instance, K.C. Yadav, ed., *The Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati* (Gurgaon, Haryana: Hope India, 2003), 36-57; Sarkar also describes the 'years of wandering' as 'a standard constituent in the life-histories of many religious leaders'. See Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 319.

<sup>15</sup> Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 319.

<sup>16</sup> See Ambedkar's Hindi rendering of the Buddha's life in B.R. Ambedkar, *Bhagwan Buddha ur Unka Dharma* (Śrāvastī: Bharatīya Bauddha Śikshā Parishada, 1970) vol. 1, 60-68. For the importance of travel in Indian nationalist leaders' political journey, see Javed Majeed, *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> R.C. Pathak (ed.), *Bhārgava Dictionary: Hindi-Angrezi (Bhargava's Standard Illustrated Dictionary of the Hindi Language)* (Varanasi: Bhargava Bhushan Press, 1966), 658; R.S. McGregor, (ed.) *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 609.

<sup>18</sup> Pathak, *Bhārgava Dictionary*, 658.

<sup>19</sup> *Samsad Bengali English Dictionary* (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1976), 747.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



distinction between ascetic wandering and travelling remain ambiguous within the Bengali lexicon, while the transformative component of the act of physical movement continue to hold significance in both definitions.

Scholars have explored the important link between movement and asceticism. Gavin Flood has argued that asceticism, as a voluntary act, is a performance of religious tradition.<sup>21</sup> Emphasising the performative aspect embedded in the disciplined behaviour of ascetics, Flood contends that asceticism is a ‘public affair’ that ‘only makes sense in the context of community and tradition’.<sup>22</sup> While Flood focuses on texts and language, analysing the body of an ascetic as a carrier of the inscription of textual tradition, Nile Green, and most recently, Timothy Dobe, have traced the social history of *faqirs* (Sufi ascetics).<sup>23</sup> The physicality of asceticism, especially pertaining to *faqirs*, has also provoked political analyses on ascetics from pre-colonial India. The ascetic’s detachment from a single locality or from a specific temple, rendered him a sacred mediator who traversed different structures of power. For this reason, historians such as Thomas Metcalf, William Pinch, Christopher Bayly, and Kim Wagner have all argued that itinerant monks triggered ‘information panics’ and ‘colonial anxiety’ within the colonial state.<sup>24</sup>

This thesis suggests that Vivekananda as a *parivrājaka* moved in between different spaces of historical power to carve out bases of support. Tracing the physical movement of Vivekananda as an indication of his intentions and the spiritual geography he inscribed, it allows us to converse with several bodies of scholarship as well as to introduce new insights into Vivekananda’s self-fashioning.

In addition to critically engaging with the existing literature on Vivekananda, this chapter challenges Jyotirmaya Sharma’s persistent rendering of Vivekananda as a pioneer of

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<sup>21</sup> Gavin Flood, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Id., 7.

<sup>23</sup> Nile Green, ‘The Faqir and the Subalterns: Mapping the Holy Man in Colonial South Asia’, *Journal of Asian History* 41:1 (2007), 57–84; Timothy Dobe, *Hindu Christian Faqir: Modern Monks, Global Christianity, and Indian Sainthood* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015). Dobe also looks at Rama Tirtha, a Hindu monk, and the Indian Christian missionary, Sadhu Sundar Singh.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); William Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empire* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Kim Wagner, *Thuggee: Banditry and the British in Early Nineteenth-Century India* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Wagner, ‘“Treading Upon Fires”: The “Mutiny”-Motif and Colonial Anxieties in British India’, *Past and Present* 218:1 (2013), 159–197. Also on colonial anxiety, see Ranajit Guha, ‘Not at Home in Empire’, *Critical Inquiry*, 23:3 (1997), 482–93.

Hindutva. It presents new insights into the Theosophical Society and Vivekananda, contra Peter Van der Veer. In its analysis of Vivekananda's social spaces and princely patronage, the chapter also engages with the emergent literature on princely states, from Bernard Cohn and Pamela Price to Janaki Nair.

By creating a converging point for different literatures on nineteenth century India, the chapter brings to the fore three new insights on Vivekananda. First, it complicates the relationship between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Rather than simply highlighting the differences between the saint and his treasured disciple, or focusing on Vivekananda's 'simultaneous act of fidelity and distortion', the chapter questions the motivation behind Vivekananda's 'deviation'.<sup>25</sup> What did being the 'authentic heir' of Ramakrishna mean?<sup>26</sup> In the first section, the chapter asserts that contrary to the existing scholarship's emphasis, the immediate implication of the 'Ramakrishna mandate' was precisely to *not* follow his ideas.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, inheriting Ramakrishna's spiritual household forced Vivekananda to deviate from the saint to garner legitimacy to lead the Ramakrishna Order. Thus, Vivekananda's *parivrājaka* phase was not an 'insignificant' period for 'gathering experience', as Chattopadhyaya has suggested, but a pivotal map of empowerment.<sup>28</sup>

Second, the chapter critically contextualises Vivekananda's movement within the nation. Sarkar has emphasised the role of Vivekananda in expanding the parochial ambit of the 'Ramakrishna cult' into the wider field of the nation and the world.<sup>29</sup> Yet, he has neglected to analyse the mechanics with which Vivekananda bridged Bengal and connected it with the rest of the nation.<sup>30</sup> The second section shows that this penetration into the national realm required patronage and involved contestation. Here, the chapter charts the starkly different routes of Vivekananda's wandering, initially with his *gurubhais* then on his own, to outline the regions and pockets of power in which Vivekananda wanted to instil his ideas and from which he hoped to secure patronage. It shows that Vivekananda strategically employed both public and intimate relationship with Indian princes in western and southern India to gather their support, both moral and financial. Similar geographies guided his interaction with the two prominent spiritual

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<sup>25</sup> Jyotirmaya Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion: Swami Vivekananda and the Making of Hindu Nationalism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), 91.

<sup>26</sup> Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 292.

<sup>27</sup> Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Viking, 2003), 76-77.

<sup>28</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda in India*, 121.

<sup>29</sup> Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 294.

<sup>30</sup> In fact, the mechanics of Vivekananda's 'nationalisation' has largely been left out in existing scholarship.

organisations of his time — the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society. Examining Vivekananda's dalliance with the Arya Samaj in Ajmer and his feud with the President of the Theosophical Society, Henry Olcott, the third section brings to light Vivekananda's preoccupation with bridging regional divides and especially, in reclaiming Madras.

Lastly, using a spatial approach, the chapter re-periodises Vivekananda's *parivrājaka* phase. While 'officially', this phase ended in 1893, when Vivekananda boarded the S.S. Peninsular India to America, this chapter extends it to 1897, when he returned to the subcontinent and established the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. These years align with the temporal constraints of Vivekananda's popularity within India. The national interest in Vivekananda's return to the subcontinent and the lavish receptions that welcomed him soon dwindled. Following the receptions, Indian newspapers began to promote the pamphlets that challenged his authenticity and did not show much interest in his second visit to the West.<sup>31</sup> More importantly and more pertinent to this chapter, the new periodisation preserves the focus on the spatial continuities; the spiritual geography that Vivekananda carved as a *parivrājaka* in 1888-1893 remained equally important for him in 1897. In the speeches he made upon his return, Vivekananda once again tried to knit the different regions together by addressing his patrons and responding to their distinct political and social registers. Thus, the *parivrājaka* phase was not a distinct period of the ascetic's wandering. It was a formative period that shaped the blueprint of Vivekananda's agenda.

In these steps, the chapter shows that Narendranath Dutt wandered through the subcontinent as a *parivrājaka* and mapped a new geography of spirituality to bolster his legitimacy within the Ramakrishna Order. As we will see, this map of the *parivrājaka* extensively covered southern India and sewed disparate regions together.

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<sup>31</sup> The *Indian Social Reformer* and the *Indian Mirror* on 27 February 1898 and 17 August 1899, respectively, printed a review of a pamphlet published by the Christian Literature Society for India that challenged Vivekananda's popularity in America. See Basu (ed.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 449, 213-214. For the lack of interest in Vivekananda's second trip to the West see Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda in India*, 264.

## The Motive of a *Parivrājaka*: Narendranath and the Nascent Ramakrishna Order



Image 2. Vivekananda (front row, middle, arms crossed) with his brother monks at the Cossipore Garden House before Ramakrishna's cremation, 16 August 1889.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout his life, Vivekananda acknowledged the importance of travelling. He saw it as an essential rite of passage for Indians, particularly in consolidating 'the nation'. 'If we really want to be a nation again', he wrote, 'we must travel ... to foreign parts. We must see how the engine of society works in other countries, and keep free and open communication with what is going on in the minds of other nations.'<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, he portrayed his *parivrājaka* years as an act of patriotism. Explaining that 'practical patriotism does not mean a mere sentiment or even emotion of love for the motherland but a passion to serve our fellow-countrymen', he cited his wandering years as an example: 'I have gone all over India on foot and have seen with my own eyes the ignorance, misery and squalor of our people.'<sup>34</sup> He argued that such extensive exploration bore political implications that surpassed both verbal and textual expatiation on nationalism. Comparing himself with Sister Nivedita, the Irish educationist who followed him to India in pursuit of spirituality and later devoted her life to Hindu nationalism, Vivekananda asserted, 'I have done much more in the way of politics than Nivedita. I roamed all over India

<sup>32</sup> 'Photo Gallery', *Vivekananda Vedanta Network, Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston*, <http://vivekananda.org/archivedphotoslideshow.asp?id=20> (accessed 5 February 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Vivekananda to Alasinga, 20 August 1893, Swami Vivekananda, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 38.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

to create revolution.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Vivekananda saw his wandering as a purposeful engagement with the condition of the motherland as a whole — of its soil and its people — rather than solely with her pockets of spiritualism.

However, the initial impetus behind Vivekananda's departure from Bengal as a *parivrājaka* did not rise directly from his passion for the nation. Rather, it had a more prosaic link to the politics of the Ramakrishna Order. Vivekananda needed the nation to strengthen his leadership of the Ramakrishna Order, rather than vice versa. Given that Ramakrishna's wife, Sarada Devi, answered the question, 'should a Sadhu travel to holy places?' with a negative, 'why should he, if he feels calm and peaceful in one fixed place?', Vivekananda's valorisation of his wandering certainly indicates his state of restlessness and a somewhat uncertain position within the Ramakrishna Order.<sup>36</sup> In order to understand the motives behind his *parivrājaka* phase, we must first turn to his relationship with Ramakrishna, and his difficult rise to power.

Ramakrishna had many disciples when he first encountered Vivekananda (then Narendranath) in 1881.<sup>37</sup> However, Narendranath quickly overshadowed the others and developed an intimate bond of affection with the illiterate saint.<sup>38</sup> According to the official accounts of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Ramakrishna immediately distinguished Narendranath from his other followers, greeting him with the words, 'Ah! You have come so late. How unkind of you to keep me waiting for so long! My ears are almost seared listening to the cheap talk of worldly people.'<sup>39</sup> He kept a close eye on Narendranath, and in the latter's absence he consoled himself by saying, 'that is good in a way, as I get overwhelmed in his presence'.<sup>40</sup> The young Narendranath, in turn, frequently expressed his love for the Master with statements such as, 'I come to you because I love you.'<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cited in Peter Heehs, *The Bomb in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India, 1900-1910* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 26 fn7.

<sup>36</sup> First Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, *Spiritual Talks* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1936), 5.

<sup>37</sup> The best work on the appeal of Ramakrishna to the *bhadralok* community remains Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 282-357. For a comprehensive record of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda's relationship, see Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 41-79.

<sup>38</sup> Jeffrey J. Kripal has made a provocative analysis on the intimacy between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. See Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1953), 24. For other accounts of Vivekananda and Ramakrishna's meetings, see Mahendranath Gupta, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1980), vol. 2, 707-723; Eastern and Western Disciples, *LSV*, vol.1, 74-83; Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 43-44.

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 49.

<sup>41</sup> Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda*, 32.

Their declaration of affection, which occasionally included mutual criticism, was strengthened by their shared spiritual affinity.<sup>42</sup> Ramakrishna's famous trance or *samadhi* often occurred in conjunction with Narendranath's singing; the guru entered the state of suspension ushered in by the 'sweet' voice of Vivekananda, while other disciples surrounded the two to witness the event.<sup>43</sup> Their relationship intensified as Ramakrishna approached his final days. Lying in his deathbed, he bestowed his spiritual gifts and disciples to Narendranath. He transferred his spiritual power with the following words, 'Today, giving you my all I have become a Fakir, a penniless beggar. By the force of the power transmitted by me, great things will be done by you.'<sup>44</sup> With this, he also delegated the leadership of his monastic disciples to the young monk saying, 'Naren, I am leaving them in your care ... You shall make arrangements for their spiritual exercises lovingly so that they do not have to return to their families.'<sup>45</sup>

This well-known statement is crucial for our understanding of the Ramakrishna Order that Narendranath inherited. Indeed, Ramakrishna's emphasis on creating an alternative home for his disciples to avoid their having to return to families roughly sketches the initial structure of the Order. To begin with, the gathering of Ramakrishna's followers took place at his residence. Wherever Ramakrishna moved, from Shyampukur to Dakshineswar, and later to Cossipore, his devotees followed. In Shyampukur, three men served him as resident-disciples, in addition to his wife, Sarada Devi, who expressed her devotion by preparing food and by providing what Swami Gambhirananda, the author of the official history of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission called, 'silent leadership' to 'her sons'.<sup>46</sup> Such metaphor of kinship appears frequently in Gambhirananda's description of the Order in its initial stage. 'Under the Master's guidance', Gambhirananda narrated, 'the Holy Mother's loving care and Narendranath's encouragement, the young men lived as a happy family.'<sup>47</sup> As we will see later, Vivekananda expressed his status within the Math using similar metaphor of home, family, and kinship.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For the moments of their dispute, see Sharma, *A Restatement*, 109.

<sup>43</sup> Vivekananda's voice is often referred to as 'sweet' in the official publications of the Ramakrishna Math. See the citation and usage of the word in Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 33, 58.

<sup>44</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *LSV*, vol.1, 182.

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 46.

<sup>46</sup> Swami Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957), 32.

<sup>47</sup> Id., 35.

<sup>48</sup> On guru-chela relationship, see Anthony Storr (ed.), *Feet of Clay: The Power and Charisma of Gurus* (London: HarperCollins, 1996); Antony Copley, *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India* (New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Malavika Kasturi, "'Asceticising" Monastic Families: Ascetic Genealogies, Property Feuds and Anglo-Hindu Law in Late Colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 43:5 (2009), 1039–1083.

According to Gambhirananda, the Order began to take shape in the garden of the Cossipore House.<sup>49</sup> With Surendranath Mitra, a lay devotee of Ramakrishna, financing all the expenses, the size of Ramakrishna's brotherhood began to increase from five in 1886, to eleven in 1887.<sup>50</sup> With its growth, however, its oddity grew more prominent. Unlike Bengal's 'Vaishnava monks and nuns', the Ramakrishna Order of monks, predominantly composed of well-educated youths, evolved not around a temple but a guru in a residential environment.<sup>51</sup> The young monks also donned 'orchre clothes of full width, as opposed to exposing most of the flesh of Naga monks, or the Vaishnava monks', and their discarding of family names for monastic names 'was something socially objectionable.'<sup>52</sup>

Things began to grow more tense after Ramakrishna's death in 1886. The lease for the Cossipore House had expired, and the Order faced a real possibility of disintegration. Some, including Narendranath, went back home to live with their families, while others accompanied Sarada in her year-long journey to Varanasi and Vrindavan. It was only after encountering Ramakrishna 'in his dream', Balaram Bose, another lay devotee and patron of the Order, purchased a deserted house in Baranagore for the young monks.<sup>53</sup> However, maintaining the structure of the monastic family proved difficult. Facing extreme poverty, the monks questioned the need for the Math, and left on pilgrimage, leaving it empty.<sup>54</sup> Between the years 1887 and 1894, out of seventeen devotees, only three remained in or around the premises.<sup>55</sup>

The spiritual family that Narendranath inherited from Ramakrishna was in this fragile state. Although Narendranath accepted the mandate to create a new spiritual household for the disciples of his guru, in his letters written in the early 1890s, he described his position with a sense of distance. Writing to the Varanasi-based Sanskritist, Pramadas Mitra in February of 1890, he confessed, 'the sons of my Master are indeed the great objects of my service, and here alone I feel I have some duty left for me.'<sup>56</sup> He saw his role as one based on duty to serve the adopted sons of his Master rather than as a leader of a household. This sense of servitude appeared repeatedly in his letters composed during his excursion across the subcontinent. He addressed the remaining devotees and brother monks as 'brothers' or 'friends' rather than

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<sup>49</sup> Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, 31.

<sup>50</sup> Id., 32; Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 75.

<sup>51</sup> Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 74; for more detail on the Baranagore House, see Id., 75-76.

<sup>54</sup> Id., 55.

<sup>55</sup> Id., 63-64.

<sup>56</sup> Vivekananda to Primadas Mitra, 19 February 1890. Vivekananda, *Letters*, 16.

‘sons’, as he would refer to them after the Parliament of the World’s Religions.<sup>57</sup> This initial reluctance to assume the role of a leader, and the aloof self-positioning within the rhetoric of kinship indicated Narendranath’s struggle to legitimise his newly inherited role within the Math. To quote Beckerlegge, ‘behind the expression of Vivekananda’s own personality and spiritual needs, there lay the problem of finding a way in which to preserve the legacy of Ramakrishna once Ramakrishna’s personal charisma had been lost to his devotees.’<sup>58</sup>

Stepping into the shoes of Ramakrishna proved challenging from the start. The need to organise *sannyasis* into an institutionalised brotherhood placed Vivekananda at an odd intersection between the life of a renouncer and a householder. This became most conspicuous in the new practices that he introduced to his *gurubhais*. In stark contrast with Ramakrishna’s teachings that emphasised devotion over scholarly expertise, *bhakti* over *jnana*, Vivekananda encouraged the study of Sanskrit to ‘restor[e] the Vedas to Bengal’.<sup>59</sup> In a similar vein, he promoted *seva*, an idea that projected the inward trajectory of *sannyasi*hood outward to the world. This shift was a big intervention. Not only did traditional *sannyasi*hood emphasise detachment from the world and pursuit of individual *moksha* (liberation), but as Sharma explains, such dedication to serving others belonged to ‘the dharma of the king or householder’.<sup>60</sup> Deviating further from the ideal *sannyasi*hood, Vivekananda also aspired to turn the Order into a hub of information. He delegated different assignments to each *gurubhai*, kept a record of their respective whereabouts, and preserved a detailed study of each region where his fellow brother monks went. For example, when he sent Akhandananda to Tibet to research Tibetan forms of Buddhism and Tantra, and urged him to discuss ‘everything in detail, in a long letter’, particularly ‘about the manners and customs of the Tibetans’.<sup>61</sup>

Understandably, Vivekananda’s innovation in the Ramakrishna Order spurred some irritation amongst his brother monks. While many saw Vivekananda as Ramakrishna’s rightful heir, others challenged his leadership of the Math.<sup>62</sup> Ramchandar, a fellow monk, questioned his right to Ramakrishna’s mandate. He denied that Ramakrishna had encouraged the

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<sup>57</sup> For instance, compare the letter written to Alasinga, 20 August 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 39 with the letter written 10 July 1893, Id., 33.

<sup>58</sup> Beckerlegge, *Swami Vivekananda*, 253.

<sup>59</sup> Vivekananda to ‘M’ 19 November 1888, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 2.

<sup>60</sup> Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 347.

<sup>61</sup> Vivekananda to Akhandananda, February 1890, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 17.

<sup>62</sup> More on this also see Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, 81-153; Sharma, *A Restatement*, 13; Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*, 124-5. This is also one of the reasons why existing scholarship has focused on the ways Vivekananda deviated from Ramakrishna.



establishment of ‘an Order of monks, or that he had given any one the ochre robe’.<sup>63</sup> Adbhutananda, one of the earliest disciples of Ramkrishna, would not associate himself with the Order, emphasising, ‘we are sadhus — why should we have land, houses, gardens, wealth? I won’t stay in such a place’.<sup>64</sup> Similar challenges also came from Ramakrishna’s lay devotees. In the official Bengali record of Ramakrishna’s teachings, Mahendranath Gupta wrote, ‘Sri Ramakrishna has transmitted mettle to all the brothers of the Math. It is no monopoly of Narendranath’s’.<sup>65</sup> Narendranath was acutely aware of these rumbles of opposition, as he later confessed, ‘Who would sympathise with the imaginations of a boy? Who would sympathise with me?’<sup>66</sup>

In order to bolster his position, Narendranath turned to Ramakrishna. His first solution was to deify his guru. In a letter written in March of 1890 to Pundit Mitra, Narendranath rendered Ramakrishna into a ‘*Bhagavan*’ with ‘no peer’.<sup>67</sup> He explained:

in times of great danger, great temptation, I have wept in extreme agony... and no response has come from anybody; but this wonderful saint, or Avatara, or anything else he may be, has come to know [sic.] of all my affliction through his powers of insight into human hearts and has lifted it off.<sup>68</sup>

Praising this *Avatara*, the ‘ever-perfected divine man’, Narendranath asserted that with Ramakrishna’s birth, ‘the race of Bengalis has been sanctified, the land of Bengal has become hallowed’.<sup>69</sup> This divine power of Ramakrishna extended beyond Bengal and covered the whole nation, as he continued, ‘[Ramakrishna] ... came on earth to save the Indians from the spell of the worldly glamour of Western culture, who therefore chose most of his all-renouncing disciples from university men’.<sup>70</sup>

Having established Ramakrishna as an incarnation of the divine, Narendranath channelled all his actions through the latter’s will. He explained his attachment to the administrative works of the Ramakrishna Mission and the importance of *seva*, social service, to Ramakrishna. He wrote, ‘I am Ramakrishna’s slave; having laid my body at his feet “with Til and Tulasi leaves”, I cannot disregard his behest ... His command was that his all-

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<sup>63</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 40.

<sup>64</sup> Cited in Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 342.

<sup>65</sup> Sharma, *A Restatement*, 283.

<sup>66</sup> Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, 41.

<sup>67</sup> Vivekananda to Pramadas Mitra, 3 March 1890, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 23.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Vivekananda to Pramadas Mitra, 26 May 1890, *Id.*, 25.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

renouncing devotees should group themselves together and I am entrusted with seeing to this.’<sup>71</sup> He repeated this metaphor of servitude in the same letter, ‘I am Ramakrishna’s servant, and I am willing even to steal and rob, if by doing so I can perpetuate his name in the land of his birth and *Sadhana* (spiritual practice) and help even a little his disciples to practice his great ideals’.<sup>72</sup>

His emphasis on complete submission to Ramakrishna, reveals to us not only the ways in which he tried to shield his transgressions, but also the ways he envisioned his authority in the Math. He would later demand the absolute loyalty from his *gurubhais*. In February of 1890, he wrote to another brother monk, Sharat Chandra Gupta, advising him strictly to observe his reverence to Ramakrishna. He wrote, ‘without steady devotion for the Guru and unflinching patience and perseverance, nothing is to be achieved. You must have strict morality. Deviate an inch from this and you are gone forever’.<sup>73</sup> The language of complete submission intensified after the Parliament, as he wrote to his disciple, ‘cultivate the virtue of obedience... no centralization is possible unless there is obedience to superiors’.<sup>74</sup> Thus, at the crux of deification was Vivekananda’s perception of, and desire for, obedience from his brother monks.

This method of channelling Ramakrishna’s will had its limits when it came to financing the Order. The death of the two benefactors, Balaram Bose and Surendra Nath Mitra, both in 1890, sharpened the mounting financial difficulty of the Order. With no lay devotees volunteering to support the young monks, or even to commemorate Ramakrishna, Vivekananda began to develop a disdain for the lifestyle of the *bhadralok*. He concluded that their lack of acceptance and appreciation for the life of renunciation had pushed Bengal into a ‘pitiable’ condition.<sup>75</sup> He expressed disappointment particularly towards those who ‘looked down upon [renunciation] as madness and sin’.<sup>76</sup> He saw this trait as inherent in Bengali elites, even those who resided outside of Bengal. Describing one of his Bengali hosts, Satish Chandra Mukherji, the founder of the Dawn Society and the Dawn Magazine, Vivekananda wrote that despite his ‘gentlemanly’ manners, Mukherji was ‘very much Westernised’, in other words, influenced by the civilisation that wreaked ‘materialistic illusion’.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Id., 24.

<sup>72</sup> Id., 26.

<sup>73</sup> Vivekananda to Sharat Chandra Gupta, 14 February 1890, Id., 15.

<sup>74</sup> Vivekananda to S, 2 May 1895, Id., 224.

<sup>75</sup> Vivekananda to Pramadas Mitra, 26 May 1890, Id., 26.

<sup>76</sup> Vivekananda to Pramadas Mitra, 21 January 1890, Id., 12.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.; Much of Annie Besant and Margaret Noble’s writings on Hindu nationalism can be found in the *Dawn Magazine*, in addition to that of Rajendra Prasad.

Lamenting that '[Bengalis] have here nothing to speak of [renunciation]', he began to turn his gaze outward.<sup>78</sup> Contemplating his next destination, he wrote in the same letter, 'the people of the North Western Province, specially the rich there, as I believe, have great zeal in noble causes like this'.<sup>79</sup> In a way, his dissatisfaction with the condition of Bengal and the anticipated resources outside of his locality propelled him to take a journey of a *parivrājaka*.

Vivekananda's challenges in legitimising his leadership within the Order, accruing financial support, and generating interest from the same community that Ramakrishna attracted, brought to the surface the impact of Ramakrishna's death on the waning legacy of the Math. This raw evidence of his incapability to wield power as the leader of his spiritual household thrust Vivekananda out of Bengal as a *parivrājaka*. Reminiscing his *parivrājaka* years, he confessed in 1894, 'I next travelled in search of funds, but do you think that the people of India were going to spend money? ... selfishness personified — are they to spend anything? Therefore, I have come to America, to earn money myself, and then return to my country'.<sup>80</sup> Paradoxically, then, Vivekananda adopted the ascetic identity of a *parivrājaka* to build authority and search for new resources and pockets of power that could render him the rightful heir of his spiritual home.

### **The *Parivrājaka* and his Pursuit of Patronage**

Narendranath, or 'Vividishananda', embarked on two separate journeys across the subcontinent as a *parivrājaka*. The first phase, from 1888 to early 1891, revolved around Varanasi, Vrindavan and Rishikesh, important sites of Hindu pilgrimage in northern India. In 1888, he visited Varanasi, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Agra, Vrindavan, Hathras, Haridwar, Rishikesh, and Baranagore.<sup>81</sup> In 1889, he went to Vaidyanath and Allahabad. In January 1890, he made an unexpected return to Calcutta, due to the death of one of his *gurubhais*, via Ghazipur and Varanasi. The route he took in the first phase mirrored the itinerary of other Hindu ascetics who roamed around pilgrimage sites. For example, Dayananda Saraswati had spent three years by the Narmada River in Madhya Pradesh, and had paid numerous visits to Mathura during his

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<sup>78</sup> Vivekananda to Pramadas Mitra, 26 May 1890, Id., 26.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Vivekananda to Haridas Viharidas Desai, Dewan of Junagadh, 19 March 1894, Id., 82.

<sup>81</sup> He went to Varanasi and Rishikesh twice in this year.

eighteen years of wandering.<sup>82</sup>

Yet, unlike Dayananda, who stayed at temples and sought knowledge for the sake of learning, Vivekananda's journeys in the same regions reflected a more strategic engagement. He frequently visited Varanasi, for it offered him knowledge that he could not obtain from Bengal amongst its *bhadralok* circles or from his illiterate guru, Ramakrishna. On his first visit there, he met Trailangya Swami, a mystic whom Ramakrishna referred to as 'the walking Shiva of Varanasi'.<sup>83</sup> On his second stay in the holy city, he sought the guidance of a pundit named Pramadas Mitra. Mitra remained his teacher of Sanskrit and Vedas, and a host in Varanasi in his later wanderings. He confessed to Mitra his doubts about certain aspects of Hindu philosophy as set out in various texts such as the Purusha-Sukta, and the Upanisads.<sup>84</sup> More importantly, Vivekananda grew intimate with the pundit, disclosing to him the condition of his family, his brother monks, and the progress of his spiritual quest. In one of his many letters to the pundit, he positioned himself under the wings of Mitra, writing, 'I am thy son, so guide me who have taken refuge in thee', and, 'I know you to be my closest in kinship, and I lay my mind bare to you.'<sup>85</sup> He also defended his administrative role within the Math to the pundit, as if to seek his approval in the following terms: 'There is the chain of iron, and there is the chain of gold. Much good comes of the latter'.<sup>86</sup> For Vivekananda, therefore, Varanasi was not merely a site of learning but one that could strengthen his command of the ancient scriptures and Sanskrit.

Such purposeful wandering became even more pronounced in his second *parivrājaka* phase. We can easily notice the striking difference between the two phases in the maps below. In the first map, depicting the initial phase when he was accompanied by a few of his *gurubhais*, we see that his movement was largely confined to northern India. When he was on his own during his second phase, he travelled extensively in South India, from princely states to the Madras Presidency and Pondicherry, never returning to the places he earlier visited. Independent from his *gurubhais*, Vivekananda carved a new and specific geography of persuasion.

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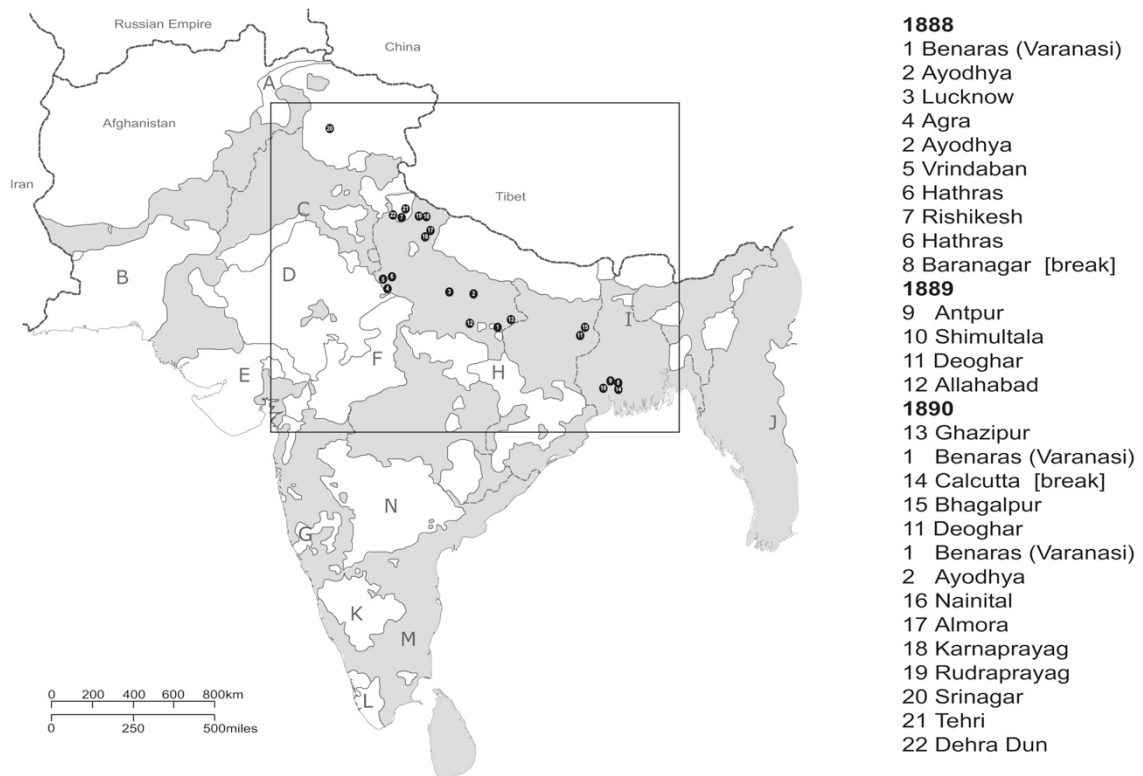
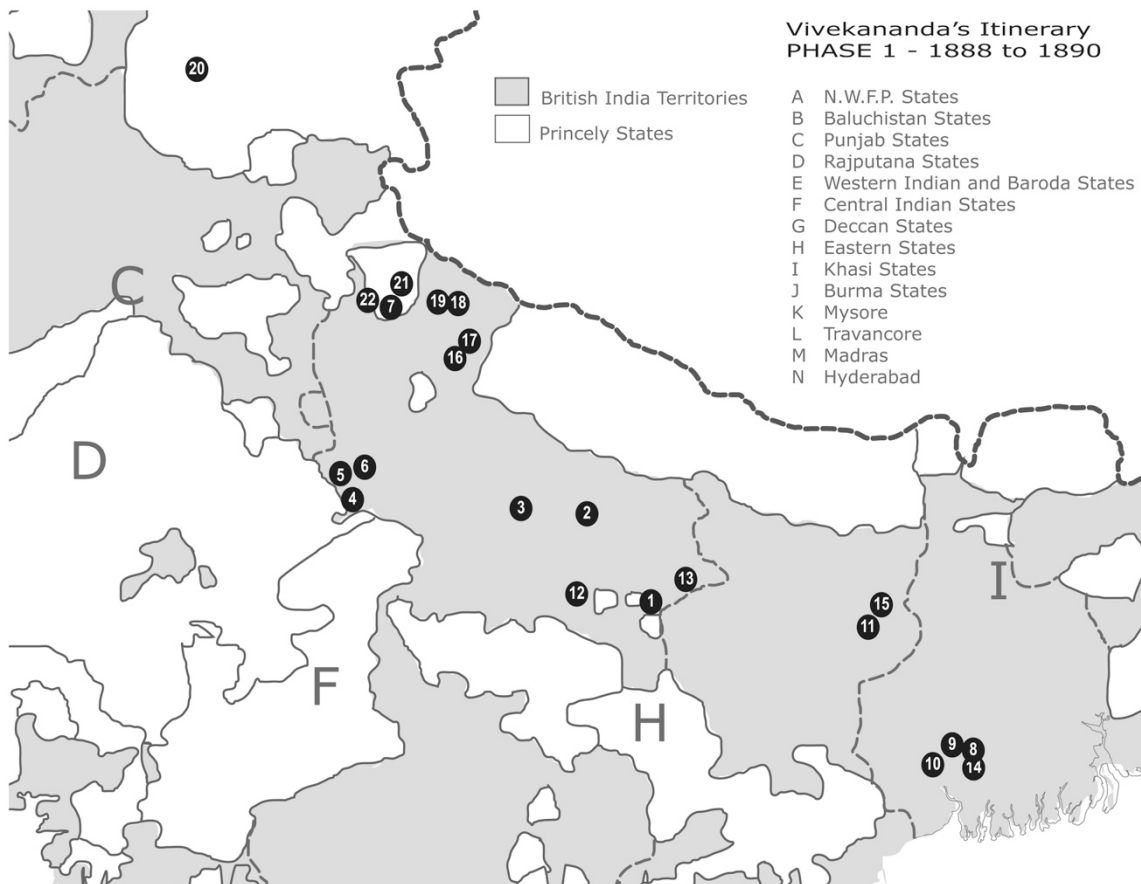
<sup>82</sup> See Yadav, *The Autobiography*, 36-58.

<sup>83</sup> V.V.B. Rama Rao, *The Walking Shiva of Varanasi: Life, Legends & Teachings of Trilingaswami* (New Delhi: Richa Prakashan, 2004), xii.

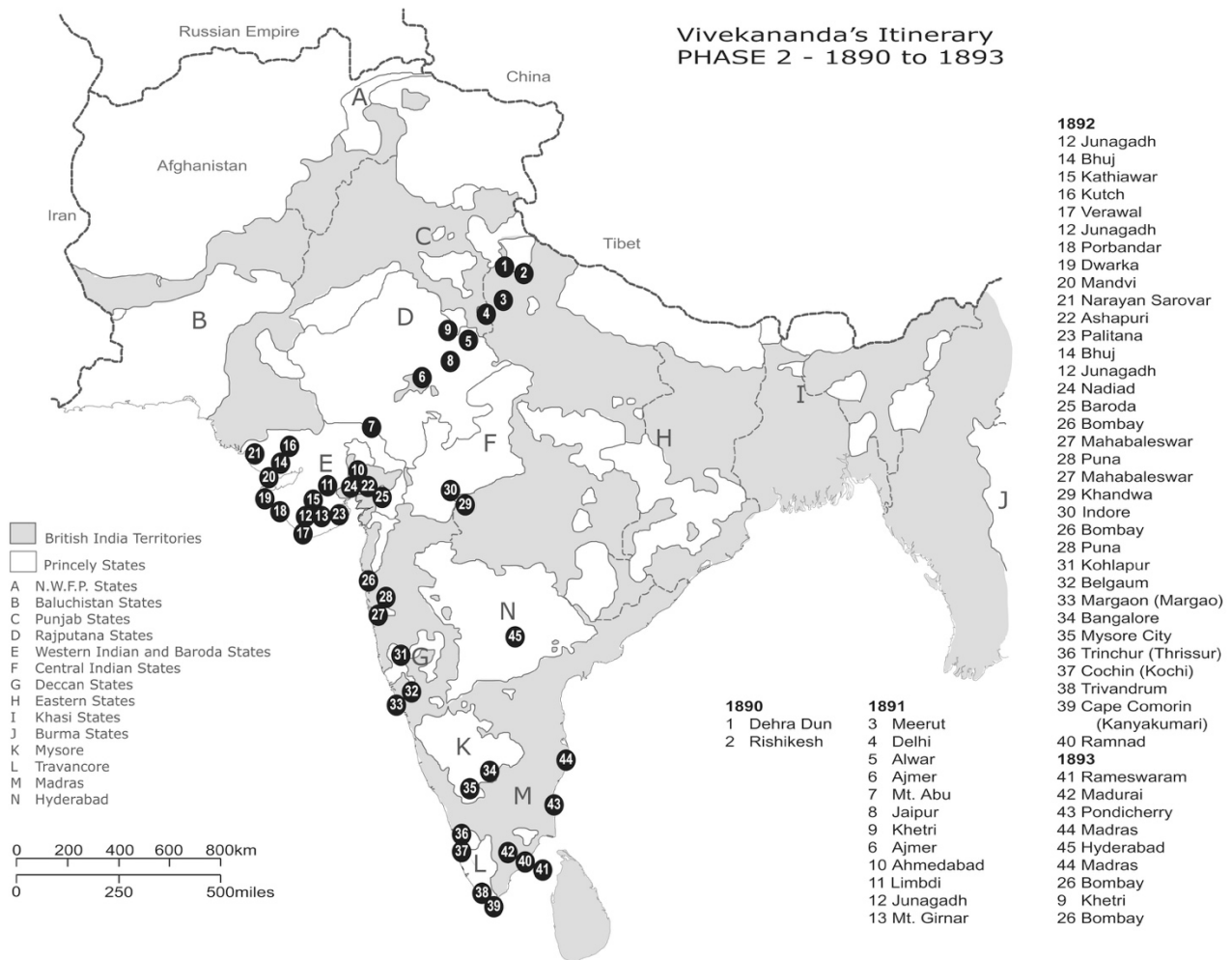
<sup>84</sup> His early letters written in the period of 1888 to 1890 to Mitra shows his dependency on the latter for Sanskrit scriptural guidance.

<sup>85</sup> Vivekananda to Pramadas Mitra, 19 February 1890, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 16; 26 May 1890. Id., 26.

<sup>86</sup> Vivekananda to Pramadas Mitra, 7 February 1890, Id., 12.



Map 1. Vivekananda's *Parivrājaka* Phase 1.  
Map of India before 1947.



Map 2. Vivekananda's *Parivrājaka* Phase 2.  
Map of India before 1947.

Three overlapping networks carried him to such variety of locations — Bengalis, nationalist elites, and dewans and rajas. Contrary to Vivekananda's vituperation against the *bhadralok* community, he depended heavily upon their hospitality. Chattopadhyaya has shown that in the first phase of his wandering, 'almost all hosts, with the two exceptions in 1890 at Almora (Lala Badri Shah) and Dehra Dun (Pandit Ananda Narayan), were Bengalis.'<sup>87</sup> Although his hosts during his second phase were mostly non-Bengalis, Bengali community continued to play an important role in introducing him to a new society. In Madras Vivekananda specifically sought out Manmathanath Bhattacharya, then the assistant to the Accountant General of the province.<sup>88</sup> Bhattacharya travelled with Vivekananda to Madras and introduced him to the public at the Triplicane Literary Society, where Vivekananda met other eminent figures in the

<sup>87</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 117.

<sup>88</sup> *Id.*, 89.

Presidency, including one of the founders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, Diwan Bahadur Rai Raghunatha Rao of Indore.<sup>89</sup>

Not surprisingly, his hosts during the second phase also included many non-Bengali nationalist leaders of the following decade. In Rajasthan, he found himself in the company of the Arya Samajists such as Har Bilas Sarda, after whom the Sarda Act of 1929 was named, and the founder of the India House, Shyamji Krishna Varma. In Poona, with Tilak as his host, Vivekananda surrounded himself with other Tilakites, such as Narashimha Chintaman Kelkar, the would-be president of Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha. Others who became his regular companions included Seth Ramdas Chhabildas, a noted barrister of Bombay, and a Civil Judge, Babu Madhavchandra Banerjee. In Madras, he participated in the events hosted by what John McLane describes as ‘local political voluntary associations’, such as the already-mentioned Literary Society at Triplicane, and what David Washbrook has termed the ‘Mylapore clique’, which included G. A. Natesan, who later printed numerous pamphlets of Vivekananda’s speeches.<sup>90</sup> Another important member of the Mylapore clique, S. Subramania Iyer, the Madras High Court judge who actively participated in Madras politics, even sponsored Vivekananda’s trip to the Parliament.<sup>91</sup>

One of the most extensive networks he established was with dewans and native princes. Dewans of both small kingdoms such as Junagadh and major princely state such as Baroda hosted and transferred Vivekananda across the subcontinent.<sup>92</sup> Even in Mysore, a major Indian princely state that Vivekananda sought out, he stayed with its dewan, K. Sheshadri Iyer for three to four weeks, before meeting the Maharaja, Chamarajendra Wodeyar X, and staying at the palace.<sup>93</sup> With the Dewan of Mysore’s letter of introduction and a railway ticket, Vivekananda travelled to Cochin to be greeted by the Dewan of Cochin Shri Shankariah. Shankariah assigned a state peon to accompany Vivekananda to Trivandrum, where he arrived in December 1892. As a guest of K. Sundararama Iyer, a tutor of Martanda Varma, the nephew

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<sup>89</sup> Id., 104.

<sup>90</sup> More on this see, John R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 11. Also see C. J. Baker, and D. A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940* (New Delhi: Macmillan Company of India, 1975), 50-3.

<sup>91</sup> David A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras Presidency, 1870-1920* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 215-221.

<sup>92</sup> The dewans of these two states who supported Vivekananda were Haridas Viharidas Desai of Junagadh, and Manibhai Jasbhai of Baroda.

<sup>93</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 95.

of the Maharaja of Travancore, Vivekananda not only accessed the royal family, but also the Trivandrum Club, where ‘all the leading educated men’ of ‘southern India’ gathered together.<sup>94</sup>

The chain of transfer from one raja to another came to a momentary halt with his introduction to the Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskara Sethupathi. Sethupathi’s close network with the ‘Mylapore clique’ and active participation in elite societies helped turn Vivekananda into a public intellectual in the south. By February 1893, Vivekananda managed to secure an elite reception even in Hyderabad, where he received public support from the Private Secretary to Nawab Bahadur of Hyderabad Sir Khurshid Jah, Sir Ashman Jah, K.C.S.I., the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, the Maharaja Norendra Krishna Bahadur, Peshkar of the State, and the Maharaja Shew Raj Bahadur.<sup>95</sup> Staying as the guest of Madhusudan Chatterjee, the ‘superintending engineer to the nizam, and a friend of Manmathanath Bhattacharya’, on 10 February 1893, Vivekananda delivered a lecture at Mahboob College, titled ‘My Mission to the West’.<sup>96</sup>

One remarkable characteristic of these three types of hosts and networks was their variety. Covering a large portion of the subcontinent, they represented different social and political movements of the time. The Arya Samaj, a branch of which Vivekananda came into contact with in Ajmer, remained predominantly a north-India movement. Contrary to its success in the Punjab, Ajmer, Bombay, and Bengal, it failed to penetrate the Madras Presidency.<sup>97</sup> One organisation in Madras that maintained a national significance was the Theosophical Society. Yet, as we will see in the next section, rather than benefitting from its extensive connections, Vivekananda developed a hostile relationship with it. The social organisations that Vivekananda gained access to in the south, Trivandrum Club and the Triplicane Literary Society, were renowned for their relatively cosmopolitan membership. According to Vivekananda’s host, Trivandrum Club represented a ‘motely gathering’ of Trivandrum town where ‘all the race and caste varieties peculiar to Southern India commingle[d]’.<sup>98</sup> Triplicane, to borrow Washbrook’s description, ‘was a communally heterogeneous and volatile area’, and its Literary Club saw a gathering of eminent elites within the Presidency.<sup>99</sup> The elites who became important supporters of Vivekananda in Madras were

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<sup>94</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), 65.

<sup>95</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *LSV*, vol. 1, 375.

<sup>96</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 106; Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, 76.

<sup>97</sup> For the reasons behind its failure to penetrate Madras, see Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, 13-14.

<sup>98</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *Reminiscences*, 65.

<sup>99</sup> Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, 212.



also highly adept political actors in the Presidency — G.A. Natesan, a wealthy publisher, and Sir S. Subramanian would later both staunchly support Annie Besant and her Home Rule League. Although these local political elites showed no obvious affiliations to each other during Vivekananda's wanderings, he remained an attraction across provincial borders.

More pertinent to this chapter is the question of the links that not only bridged these different regions, but also the ones from which Vivekananda explicitly drew patronage—expatriate Bengalis and princes. Vivekananda publicised his connection only with the latter, seldom acknowledging his reliance on the former. This was because the native princes encouraged him to attend the Parliament of the World's Religions as their representative of Hinduism.

According to the official records published by the Ramakrishna Mission, the rajas and dewans who most ardently supported Vivekananda were the Rajas of Mysore, Limbdi, Ramnad and Khetri, and the Dewan of Junagadh. Geographically dispersed — Limbdi and Junagadh in western India, Khetri in Rajputana, Ramnad and Mysore in the southern parts of the subcontinent — these states, Mysore excluded, were small *thikanas* (estate) that held a relatively subordinate position within the British Raj. Given that the Maharaja of Jaipur and Gaekwad of Baroda generously sponsored many elites and nationalists, Vivekananda's lack of association with them raises interesting questions about the larger world of patronage that Vivekananda sought out. It was not as though Vivekananda consciously avoided Jaipur and Baroda. On the contrary, he had emphatically expressed his admiration for the Gaekwad of Baroda, and travelled to both places.<sup>100</sup> However, his visits to these two princely states did not transform him into a client or a guru of the famously generous Indian rulers. In Jaipur, he only met with the Commander-in-Chief of the State, Sardar Hari Singh, and in Baroda he only spoke to one of the ministers of the State, Bahadur Manibhai Jashbai. Despite his lack of success with the maharajas of these two princely states, at the end of his journey, Vivekananda had accumulated an eclectic group of royal patrons.

Vivekananda's princely network had three notable characteristics. First, unlike other Hindu elites or *sannyasis* of his time, Vivekananda did not simply seek out 'the bedrock of Hindu power'.<sup>101</sup> A comparison between Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati elucidates the peculiarity of Vivekananda's selective wooing of princes.

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<sup>100</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *Reminiscences*, 66.

<sup>101</sup> V.D. Savarkar cited in Prabhu Bapu, *Hindu Mahasabha in Colonial North India, 1915-1930: Construction Nation and History* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 32.

Although Dayananda as a *parivrājaka* predominantly visited temples and holy sites in northern India, he dedicated the last years of his life to creating Vedanta-led politics in Rajasthan to be implemented by its Rajputs. He succeeded to an extent. The Raja of Masuda, a large estate in Ajmer-Mewara, and the Raja of Shahpura of the Sisodia clan opened their door to the ascetic. The Maharaja Sajjan Singh in Udaipur generously supported Dayananda and his projects and looked to him as his close advisor. But Dayananda also faced resistance from other Rajputs. In Jaipur he struggled to meet the Maharaja, and ultimately lost his opportunity by criticising Shaivism.<sup>102</sup> He encountered similar resistance in Jodhpur. Although invited by the Maharaja, Jaswant Singh, Dayananda could only communicate with him through letters. He later blamed Singh's lack of response to his moral flaws, such as, 'drinking, consorting with prostitutes, kite-flying, gambling' and explained that though the Maharaja himself had an 'excellent' nature, he was swayed in the wrong direction by his 'bad company', which included his Muslim minister, Miyan Faizulla Khan.<sup>103</sup> He then advised the Maharaja that 'no Muslim or Christian should be appointed as his tutor, as they would turn him away from the Vedic dharma'.<sup>104</sup> Dayananda's mission amongst the native princes, irrespective of his success, reflected the core beliefs of Hindutva that would be forcefully expressed few decades later.<sup>105</sup> His vision was that the revival of Aryavarata required the leadership of Hindu rulers who practiced and adhered to the Vedic dharma.<sup>106</sup> In cases of resistance, whether for Dayananda or other members of the Samaj, the Muslim 'other' presented a potential scapegoat.

Contrary to Dayananda, Vivekananda did not seek the triad of Hinduism, native princes of north-western India, and 'Hindu' India in his search for princely patronage. Certainly, he saw the appeal of Rajputana, as he wrote to a *gurubhai*, 'try to develop spirituality and philanthropy amongst the Thakurs in the different places of Rajputana ... make a trip now and then to Malsisar, Alsisar, and all the other 'sars' that are there'.<sup>107</sup> However, he did not limit his hunt for Indian princely support to this region. Rather, with his increasingly Jesuitical approach, he saw princes as potential catalysts to expediting pan-Indian reform. He confessed, 'if I can win over to my cause those in whose power are wealth and the administration of the

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<sup>102</sup> Yadav, *The Autobiography*, 58.

<sup>103</sup> J.T.F. Jordens, *Dayananda Sarasvati: His Life and Ideas* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 237, 238; Paul K. Johnson, *The Masters Revealed: Madame Blavatsky and the Myth of the Great White Lodge* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994), 113.

<sup>104</sup> Jordens, *Dayananda Sarasvati*, 238.

<sup>105</sup> See for instance, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (Bombay: Veer Savarkar Prakashan, 2005).

<sup>106</sup> Jordens, *Dayananda Sarasvati*, 236.

<sup>107</sup> Vivekananda to Akhandananda, 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 93.

affairs of thousands, my mission will be accomplished all the sooner; by influencing one Maharaja alone I can indirectly benefit thousands of people.’<sup>108</sup> Thus his interactions with Indian rulers were neither solely limited to the rajas of Rajputana nor to Hindus.

Indeed, Vivekananda’s access to his rajas relied on dewans or chief ministers of a royal court, many of whom were Muslims. He reached Trivandrum with a Muslim peon of the Cochin State, and Munshi Faiz Ali Khan, a *vakil* (lawyer) of a political agent in Abu in the state of Kishangarh, played a pivotal role in bringing Vivekananda to Rajputana. The munshi not only appealed to his court to provide refuge for the *parivrājak*, but also arranged the meeting between the Raja of Khetri and the monk, the relationship that remained profoundly important, as we will see.<sup>109</sup> This route to the throne of Hindu power starkly contrasted with the one imagined by Dayananda, who tried to persuade Jaswant Singh to rid himself of the (Muslim) ‘bad company’. While Vivekananda undeniably saw Hinduism as a pivotal guiding spirit in Indian nationhood, he did not seek exclusivity in his search for patronage.

Despite his relative lenience, Vivekananda crafted highly specific relationships with his patrons. This leads us to the second and third peculiarities of his princely network — public and private relationships. After his success at the Parliament of the World’s Religions, Vivekananda explicitly publicised the patronage of the Maharaja of Mysore, Chamarajendra Wodeyar X, and Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskara Sethupathi. In interviews given to both American and Indian newspapers, he presented himself as an envoy of Hinduism elected by Wodeyar and Sethupathi.

To an extent, Vivekananda told the truth. It was Wodeyar who first introduced the idea of the Parliament to Vivekananda and Sethupathi who urged him to consider the international opportunity. While both rajas promised to support Vivekananda’s journey, securing donations from them proved more difficult than their initial offers suggested. He wrote to Alasinga, ‘you see I cannot be sure of any promise of a Dakshini (southern) Raja. They are not Rajputs. A Rajput would rather die than break his promise.’<sup>110</sup> In fact, most of the funds came from his lay devotees in Madras, who ‘collected about Rs. 4000’.<sup>111</sup> Subramania Iyer and Manmatha Battacharya, and Sethupathi donated Rs. 500 each, Wodeyar Rs. 1000-1500, and Maharaja Ajit Singh of Khetri contributed a total of Rs. 3500.<sup>112</sup> Given that Sethupathi was renowned for his

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<sup>108</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *LSV*, vol.1, 293.

<sup>109</sup> Jhābaramalla Śarmā, *Rājasthāna Meṃ Svāmī Vivekānanda*, (Naī Dillī: Jayapura: Bhīlavārā Samskr̥ti Prakāśana; Prākṛta Bhāratī Akādamī, 1989), 22.

<sup>110</sup> Vivekanadna to Alasinga, 11 February 1893, Vivekananda, *CWSV*, vol. 8, 292.

<sup>111</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 107-108.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

generosity, which at times amounted to a Rs. 5000 donation, his meagre offer of Rs. 500 was hardly a notable contribution. Furthermore, when juxtaposed with the amount prepared by the Madras disciples and Ajit Singh, the sum of Rs. 1500-2000 from the two southern Indian monarchs seem almost insignificant. Therefore, when Vivekananda presented himself as an envoy of the Raja of Ramnad and Maharaja of Mysore, he was not referring to their practical or financial help. Instead, he was referring to their territorial significance.

Although neither Mysore nor Ramnad had much leverage with the British, Wodeyar X and Sethupathi consciously and effectively wielded their power within their territory. Janaki Nair has argued that despite losing the power over the administration of the Mysore state to its British-controlled bureaucracy, Wodeyar X completed 'the transition' of 'Mysore as the realm of a ruling dynasty whose fortunes waxed and waned to Mysore as a *territorial unit* of which the ruling family was only a symbol.'<sup>113</sup> This was a remarkable departure from his predecessors. In contrast to 'his sedentary father', Wodeyar X frequently travelled across the Mysore state and offered *darshan* (auspicious sight) to familiarise his people with their king.<sup>114</sup> He also contributed to the 'integration of Mysore into a nation-space', as he carried out an extensive survey of other regions within the subcontinent.<sup>115</sup> He took his last breath in one of the cities he most frequently visited, Calcutta.

Similarly, Sethupathi actively presented himself both within his estate and the Madras Presidency. As Pamela Price has shown, while using the traditional role of a raja, evoking the tropes of honour, generosity, and spectacle, Sethupathi also kept a close eye on the public opinion in Madras and participated in Madras's 'various clubs and societies for social improvement'.<sup>116</sup> Given his conspicuous presence in Madras, it is not surprising that he joined forces with figures like S. Subramania Iyer to organise the welcome reception for Vivekananda. Therefore, Vivekananda's highlighting the patronage of Wodeyar X and Sethupathi signified a larger regional and even national affiliation.

If Vivekananda sought public patronage with the southern princes to expand his legitimacy in southern India, he cultivated a deeper relationship with the Dewan of Junagadh and the Maharaja of Khetri. Using the language of vulnerability, Vivekananda fashioned himself as their loyal and subservient subject. In his letters, we see him vacillating between a

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<sup>113</sup> Janaki Nair, *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region Under Princely Rule* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 11. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>114</sup> Id., 135.

<sup>115</sup> Id., 19, 139.

<sup>116</sup> Price, *Kingship and Political Practice*, 167.

call for forgiveness and one for support. To the Dewan of Junagadh, Haridas Viharidas Desai, Vivekananda guaranteed his innocence as he departed to America, ‘I assure you, [I am] the innocent boy you found me at Junagad, and my love for your noble self is the same or increased a hundredfold because I have had a mental comparison between yourself and the Dewans of nearly all the states in Dakshin.’<sup>117</sup> He also asked to be pardoned for his lack of correspondence and wrote, ‘I implore you to pardon me as a father pardons a son, and let me not be haunted with the impression that I was ever ungrateful to one who was so good to me.’<sup>118</sup> We see a similar ‘father and son’ language in his relationship with Raja Ajit Singh of Khetri. Describing their relationship as bounded by ‘the closest ties of love’, Vivekananda confessed his inability to sever his ties to his biological family and concern for their material wellbeing.<sup>119</sup> The Raja, then, provided monthly stipend and a new shelter in Bengal for Vivekananda’s mother, and oversaw the welfare of his brothers, including the revolutionary, Bhupendranath Dutt. This intimacy continued even during Vivekananda’s travel abroad. He confided in the Raja during his most trying days in America, confessing his ‘feel[ing] [a]shame[d] to beg from [the American friends] all the time’ for funds.<sup>120</sup> Ajit Singh responded by raising money within his *thikana* as well as in Madras.<sup>121</sup>

While Vivekananda described himself and Singh as, ‘such souls — born to help each other in a big work for the good of mankind’, they also nurtured their relationship through an older form of statecraft based on the gift of *khilat* (robes of honour) and the transfer of symbolic power therein.<sup>122</sup> Before Vivekananda’s departure to Chicago, Singh gave him two gifts that would transform his identity — his name and his turban. The first gift of naming revealed a moment of self-fashioning that still remains largely neglected in existing studies of selfhood, particularly in regards to Vivekananda.<sup>123</sup>

The act of selecting and declaring a new name is a very particular form of claiming agency. For instance, M. N. Roy opened his autobiography with the statement, ‘I was born as

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<sup>117</sup> Vivekananda to Haridas Viharidas Desai, May 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 29.

<sup>118</sup> *Id.*, 30.

<sup>119</sup> *Id.*, 29.

<sup>120</sup> Vivekananda to Maharaja of Khetri, 17 September 1898, *CWSV*, vol.5, 140.

<sup>121</sup> Śarmā, *Rājasthāna Mem Svāmī*, vol.2, 22.

<sup>122</sup> Benishankar Sharma, *Swami Vivekananda—A forgotten chapter of his life* (Calcutta: Oxford Book and Stationary, 1963), 118.

<sup>123</sup> One interesting scholarship is on the Linguistic Survey of India (1894-1928) and the British attitude towards proper names and identity in Javed Majeed, ‘What’s in a (Proper) Name? Particulars, Individuals, and Authorship in the Linguistic Survey of India and Colonial Scholarship’ in *Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Institutions in Colonial India*, eds. Daud Ali and Indra Sengupta (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 19-39.

Narendra Nath Bhattacharya, and adopted the name of M. N. Roy while in the United States of America, and have no other aliases'.<sup>124</sup> As this dramatic line illustrates, a new name marked one's ownership of a new selfhood. Particularly for religious figures, changing their names indicated their spiritual transformation. Through their wandering years, Ghanshyam Pande became Swaminarayan, Mool Shankar was transformed into Dayananda Saraswati, Don David Hewavitarne became Angarika Dharmapala, and Narendranath Dutta changed to Vivekananda.

As a *parivrājaka*, Vivekananda often changed his name in the hope of immersing himself in solitude and 'escap[ing] from fame'.<sup>125</sup> He introduced himself as either Satchidananda or Vividishananda between 1887 and 1890, as Vivekananda in 1892 in Gujarat and Rajasthan, then again as Satchidananda in Madras, and as Vivekananda from Bombay to America until his death. Upon their first meeting, the Raja of Khetri gave him a new name that he deemed more appropriate for a saint, Vivekananda, 'the bliss of discerning wisdom'.<sup>126</sup> Although the name appeared in the Khetri Waqiyat Register as early as the summer of 1891, Vivekananda kept this name a secret even from his brother monks at the Math until he boarded the ship for America.<sup>127</sup> Thereafter, he presented himself to the world only by this name.<sup>128</sup>

The Raja's gift of the name came in tandem with the second gift, the turban. Singh first gave him the turban, a specific kind worn in Rajasthan, to alleviate the heat of Khetri. However, Vivekananda stretched the practical function of the turban beyond his corporeal needs, and made it a part of his identity, especially on his trips around the West.<sup>129</sup> The turban distinguished him from other non-Christian representatives at the Parliament of the World's religions, where, as he noted with much amusement, American attendees often mistook him for an Oriental prince.<sup>130</sup>

Contextualising Vivekananda's appropriation of the turban and adoption of the new name in the longer history of *khilat* illuminates the implication of this transaction. The politics of gift-giving or *khilat* in Indian statecraft dates to the early Mughal Empire.<sup>131</sup> A political act

<sup>124</sup> Verinder Grover, (ed.), *M.N. Roy* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1991), 3.

<sup>125</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 67, 70.

<sup>126</sup> Julius Lipner, *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 1998), 273 n16.

<sup>127</sup> Śarmā, *Rājasthāna Mem Svāmī*, vol 2. 38.

<sup>128</sup> Occasionally, he used 'Satchidananda' to his close disciples. See his letter to Alasinga, 11 February 1893 in Vivekananda, *CWSV*, vol.8, 292.

<sup>129</sup> On dress and identity see Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (London: Hurst & Co., 1996).

<sup>130</sup> See Vivekananda to Alasinga, 20 August 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 40.

<sup>131</sup> Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 115; also see J.F. Richards, *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

conducted through the touch of an object, *khilat* was a kingly performance that established a power hierarchy between the sovereign and his subjects. In this ceremony, a brushing of the emperor's robe, or his turban, symbolised the attachment of the subject's loyalty and allegiance to the body of the king. This political performance became a useful tool in establishing hierarchy of power, particularly in times of political transitions. Mughal emperors distributed *khilat* to consolidate loyalty from the Rajputs and the East India Company's diplomats. The British used *khilat* to confer rights to *nizams* (regional administrators or governors) to secure their nascent rule.

In this kingly performance, the turban, the symbolic nest of sovereignty, carried the most significant weight of authority.<sup>132</sup> 'Succession to the turban', to borrow Bernard Cohn's words, often carried a ceremonial, and celebratory meaning that marked a beginning of a new reign, as well as a 'a sign of complete surrender'.<sup>133</sup> Such politics of gifting remained at the crux of *rajadharma* as practiced by Vivekananda's patrons. As historians have long argued, Indian princes, regardless of the size of their territory or their position against the colonial government, constructed their power through the gift.<sup>134</sup>

Situated in the context of this symbolism of the turban and the politics of *khilat*, the gift of the turban and name bore significant implications: it was much more than a way to avoid heat stroke. Vivekananda's acceptance of the Raja's turban and his complete absorption of it into his own identity indicated a transfer or extension of the Raja's sovereignty. Narendranath of Bengal went through phases as Vividishananada and Satchidananda to finally become Vivekananda of India, ready 'to spread [his ideas] all over the world'.<sup>135</sup>

Although Vivekananda explored distinct routes in his two separate phases of wanderings, in both phases he used his *parivrājaka* identity to expand his basis of authority and legitimacy beyond the ambit of Ramakrishna and Bengal. Through the vulnerability of a son, he channelled the knowledge of the Varanasi pundit, Pramadas Mitra, to institute his own school of thought within the Ramakrishna Order. Through the gifts and intimacy, he re-

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<sup>132</sup> See C. A. Bayly, 'The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700-1930', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1986), 285-322; Turbans also became a marker of identity in distinguishing one's religious affiliation, caste, and status. See Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 150-152.

<sup>133</sup> Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians*, 115.

<sup>134</sup> Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: The Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 55-108; 130-131; Nair, *Mysore Modern*, 4-8; Price, *Kingship and Political Practice*, 78-9, 84-5, 100-2, 104-5; Ramusack, *The Indian Princes*, 6, 140-146.

<sup>135</sup> Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*, 89.

fashioned his identity in the image of a kingly ascetic. He also empowered himself by publicly displaying the patronage of Wodeyar X and Sethupathi, who wielded wide support in southern India.

The constellation of Vivekananda's princely patrons and the diversity of the three kinds of networks bring to the surface one crucial consistency — the primacy of widening the geography of his legitimacy. Rather than striving for a certain ideological and communal agenda like Dayananda, Vivekananda did not confine himself to the circle of Rajputs nor to the interactions of Hindus. At the crux of his wandering lay an extensive search for support across various territories in India. Such drive for expansion became more explicit in Vivekananda's engagement with two influential organisations of his time — the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society.

### **Dalliance with the Arya Samaj and Battle against the Theosophical Society**

*My idea at present is to start three centres at three capitals. These would be my normal schools, from thence I want to invade India.*  
-Vivekananda to Sara Ole Bull<sup>136</sup>

The Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society were founded in 1875 in Bombay and in New York respectively. Sharing the same interest in Vedantic Hinduism, they merged into the 'Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj of India' in 1878, only to separate after four years.<sup>137</sup> Their split had no impact on each organisation, and both thrived in their respective territories. The Arya Samaj, wielding much force in the Punjab, expanded across northern India. The Theosophical Society rooted itself in Adyar in Madras and bred numerous branches across the three presidencies. Given their extensive branches and bold branding of Hinduism, it is not surprising that Vivekananda encountered both organisations in his wandering years. However, their meeting did not culminate in any new merger or collaboration. This section argues that this was because Vivekananda harboured his own agenda to 'invade India', as he confessed to

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<sup>136</sup> Vivekananda to Sara Ole Bull, 5 May 1897, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 334.

<sup>137</sup> For more on this, see Jordens, *Dayananda Sarasvati*, 207-213; James A. Santucci, 'Theosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to New Religious Movements*, ed. Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 235-237.



Sara Ole Bull. Contrary to Jyotirmaya Sharma's grouping of Vivekananda with Dayananda, in his wish to penetrate the whole of the subcontinent, Vivekananda developed a more inclusive Aryanism that set him apart from the Arya Samaj. Contrary to what Van der Veer implies, the idea of Hindu spirituality did not bring Vivekananda and the Theosophical Society together. In contrast, Vivekananda placed himself in direct opposition to the Theosophical Society and grew ever more determined to reclaim Madras from the latter. As we will see, in both engagements Vivekananda prioritised geographical unity for his own project.

In the summer of 1891 in Ajmer in Rajasthan, Vivekananda found himself with the Arya Samaj leaders of its regional chapter.<sup>138</sup> He first encountered Arya Samajists in Mount Abu in the company of Raja of Khetri Ajit Singh, Hardayal Singh of Jodhpur, Thakur Fateh Singh of Rathor, Thakur Mukund Singh Chouhan of Jaleswar, and Man Singh of Jamnagar. He was then a guest of Thakur Mukund Singh, an Arya Samajist, who introduced him to Har Bilas Sarda, the president of the Arya Samaj's local chapter, and his host of three weeks in Ajmer. Sarda, then also a member of the Pratinidhi Sabha of Rajputana, and the Paropkarini Sabha, brought Vivekananda to the circles of Arya Samajists and eminent social reformers in the region. One figure he insisted on introducing Vivekananda to was Shyamji Krishna Varma, who would later found the India House and Indian Home Rule Society in London.<sup>139</sup> Varma also hosted the monk for roughly two weeks.<sup>140</sup>

Although they spent several weeks together, there is no record of what transpired between these three personalities in the summer of 1891. Their relationship with Vivekananda can be best described as a dalliance. Sarda confessed his attraction to Vivekananda as not rising from the monk's spiritual authority, but from his patriotic spirit and personality. Reminiscing about his encounter with Vivekananda, Sarda repeatedly remarked on Vivekananda's 'eloquence and patriotism' and his 'nationalistic attitude of mind'.<sup>141</sup> He also emphasised being 'charmed by Vivekananda's songs' and 'pleasant manners'.<sup>142</sup> Apart from these brief and ambiguous descriptions, Vivekananda did not feature at all in these two figures' later writings. This curiously cursory engagement created by once shared interest in Hinduism and love for the motherland between Vivekananda and his Arya Samaj contacts in Rajasthan can be

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<sup>138</sup> He first went to Alwar, then to Mount Abu and Jaipur, where he encountered the Commander in Chief of the State, Sardar Hari Singh.

<sup>139</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *LSV*, vol.1, 286.

<sup>140</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), 20.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

understood by the different intentions in their use of the concepts, Aryanism, Hinduism, and race.

The Arya Samaj that welcomed Vivekananda had not yet split. It was the Samaj held together by its founder Dayananda Saraswati's interpretation and representation of the Vedas. Dayananda, like other neo-Hindu revivalists, designated the Vedas as the ultimate font of knowledge from which both western scientific and religious progress originated. As many historians have argued, his rendition of Vedanta and Aryanism semiticised Hinduism and placed it on the same comparative platform as Islam and Christianity.<sup>143</sup> Under the founding gospel and the truth of Vedanta, Hindus became broadly combined into one race that survived colonisation of various outsiders.

Sarda further developed Dayananda's ideas in more aggressive directions. In his *Hindu Superiority*, Sarda discussed Hindu colonisation of the world.<sup>144</sup> In his later writing, *Maharana Sanga*, he narrated a history based on exclusion. He designated the golden age of Indian political history to Rana Sanga's reign, which he saw as the highlight of Rajput culture.<sup>145</sup> By praising Rana Sanga's bravery against Muslim forces, he delineated a clear foe against the Sisodiya clan of the sixteenth century Rajput. In these writings, Sarda glorified the warrior race of Rajputs and the territorial significance of *Bharatvarsha* (India) that stood against foreign threat of Islamic powers.

This clear demarcation of Hindus of *Aryavarta* (land of Aryas) against the Muslim 'invaders' further evolved into the language of race in the writing of another Arya Samaj acquaintance of Vivekananda, Lajpat Rai. In *The Arya Samaj*, Rai portrayed the Samaj as the guardian of Hinduism. The Samaj taught 'true and genuine Hinduism of the Vedas', worked 'in the interests of the Hindus, and it protect[ed] the Hindu community from the aggressions of other alien religions'.<sup>146</sup> Sidney Webb, a Fabian socialist and the co-founder of London School of Economics who wrote the preface to this book, further supported this racial rhetoric. Webb

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<sup>143</sup> For this argument see Kenneth Jones, 'Communalism in the Punjab: The Arya Samaj Contribution', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 28:1 (1968), 39-54; Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Hindu Nationalism: Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building', *Economic and Political Weekly* 20:12-13 (1993), 517-24. John Zavos has provided a concise review of this argument in John Zavos, 'The Arya Samaj and the Antecedents of Hindu Nationalism', *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 3:1 (1999), 57-58; 57-81.

<sup>144</sup> Har Bilas Sarda, *Hindu Superiority: An Attempt to Determine the Position of the Hindu Race in the Scale of Nations* (Ajmer: Rajputana Printing Works, 1906).

<sup>145</sup> Har Bilas Sarda, *Maharana Sanga, the Hindupat: The Last Great Leader of the Rajput Race* (Ajmer: Scottish Mission Industries, 1918).

<sup>146</sup> Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj: An Account of its Origin, Doctrines, and Activities, with a Biographical Sketch of the Founder* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1915), 274.

introduced the organisation as the ‘Society of the Aryan Race’ dedicated to the ‘regeneration of the Hindu race’.<sup>147</sup> In their collaborative historicisation of the organisation, Arya Samaj emerged as a reaction to the Brahmo Samaj’s utopian religious syncretism. Unlike the latter, Arya Samaj was dedicated to protecting the *Volk* of India — the Aryan race — from being contaminated with alien values.

If the rhetoric of the Arya Samaj members pivoted on racial purity, rooted in northern and western India, Vivekananda propagated a more inclusive understanding of Aryanism. Sharma has interpreted Vivekananda’s assertion of inclusivity, shown in his famous statement, ‘the whole of India is Aryan, nothing else’, as Vivekananda’s plan to create a nation based on the single race of Aryans.<sup>148</sup> Following this logic, Sharma has drawn a direct link from Vivekananda to Hindutva.<sup>149</sup> Although not pushing his argument to quite the same extent, Thomas Green, comparing the Aryanism of Max Müller and that of Vivekananda, has also highlighted exclusive territorialisation implied in the latter’s deployment of the concept.<sup>150</sup> As these scholars have correctly suggested, Vivekananda’s ‘inclusive’ Aryanism inherently presumed its superiority. However, his scattered and often contradictory writings on the subject reveal a more complicated engagement with the geography of *Aryavarta*. By challenging the purity of the Aryan race and commending Dravidian civilisation, Vivekananda strove to unite the racial divisions between north and south. Thus, Sharma’s attempt at placing Vivekananda at the heart of the genealogy of Hindutva, which largely took its own cue from Orientalist discourse of Aryan race-theory, is misguided.

In fact, Vivekananda’s Aryanism took a stance against the dominant trend of Orientalist scholarship. Thomas Trautmann has shown that the British Orientalists in the nineteenth century saw philology and ethnology as two sides of the same coin. This led Max Müller to propose a racial theory of Aryanism, which divided north and south India based on skin colour and language.<sup>151</sup> Through the Aryan race theory, Müller proposed a brotherhood between the colonised and the coloniser based on their shared bloodline. Though he retracted this argument

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<sup>147</sup> Id., xiv.

<sup>148</sup> Cited in Sharma, *Hindutva*, 95.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> For more on the relationship between the two, see Thomas J. Green, *Religion for a Secular Age: Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington: V. T.: Ashgate, 2016), 66-67. Green shows that Vivekananda’s exclusivity was against Müller’s idea of Aryan brotherhood.

<sup>151</sup> Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 131-164; also see Thomas Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (Berkeley, CA.; London: University of California Press, 2006).

later in his life, his theory gained momentum in India, for it presumed a superiority, which also assumed purity, of the Aryan race.

Vivekananda attempted to separate the link between language and race. He first argued against theories of racial purity and debunked the Brahman's position in society as the descendent of pure race. He maintained 'that the Brahmins were as much a mixed race as the rest of mankind, and that their belief in their racial purity was largely founded on fiction'.<sup>152</sup> Implicitly challenging Müller's idea, Vivekananda attempted to erase the distinction between Aryans and Dravidians, by replacing the issue of race with language. He asserted, 'whatever may be the import of philological terms "Aryan" and "Tamilian" ... the dividing line has been from the ancient times one of language and not of blood'.<sup>153</sup> The Aryan race, 'a mixed race in every sense of the word', originated from 'a mixture of two great races, Sanskrit-speaking and Tamil-speaking'.<sup>154</sup> Praising the Tamilian Accado-Sumerian race theory propounded by Pandit D. Savariroyan, he declared, 'this makes us proud of the blood of the great civilization, which flowered before all others...[C]ompared to [t]hose antiquity, the Aryans and Semites are babies'.<sup>155</sup>

By debunking the idea of Aryan purity and honouring the Dravidian civilisation, Vivekananda attempted to show that the two had no predetermined basis of segregation. Although everyone ultimately belonged to the 'mixed' Aryan race — for all the great Indian civilisations culminated in the latter — Vivekananda sought to erase the ethnological and geographical division of the subcontinent. He used Aryanism not as an exclusive identity marker within India, but as a label to encompass the whole of India. We can notice this effort of bringing the subcontinent under one umbrella in his written speech to his Madras followers: 'friends, fellow-countrymen and co-religionists of Madras ... the people of Northern India are specially grateful to you of the South, as the great source to which most of the impulses that are working in India today can be traced'.<sup>156</sup> For our Bengali monk, appeasing the Madras crowd occupied the heart of his mission.

This preoccupation with uniting the south with north caused friction between Vivekananda and one of Madras' largest spiritual organisations, the Theosophical Society. Existing scholarship on the Theosophical Society paints a positive picture of its impact in India.

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<sup>152</sup> 'Aryans and Tamilians', *CWSV*, vol. 4, 299.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Id.*, 299; 301.

<sup>155</sup> *Id.*, 301.

<sup>156</sup> Vivekananda to 'friends, fellow-countrymen and co-religionists of Madras', September 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 151.

Mark Bevir and Van der Veer have emphasised its significance in bridging the colonised and coloniser binary.<sup>157</sup> They argue that the Society's endorsement of 'Hindu spirituality', in combination with Aryan theory, provided new political capital to Hindu nationalism. More specifically, Bevir contends that the organisation's extensive branches in all three presidencies united nationalist leaders across regions, and aided the politics of the Indian National Congress and the Home Rule League.<sup>158</sup> Using what he calls 'interactional perspective', Van der Veer has drawn a broader umbrella of spiritualism of the West and of the East, including that of Vivekananda.<sup>159</sup> He argues that despite their differences, spiritual movements in Britain and in India ultimately shared 'antinomian radicalism against the state in Britain and the colonial state in India'.<sup>160</sup> However, a close inspection of the lesser-known relationship between Vivekananda and the Theosophical Society under Henry Olcott's leadership reveals that the Society had many enemies, especially in Vivekananda.

Vivekananda and Olcott's hostility began with the monk's refusal to join the organisation. By the time Vivekananda reached Madras, he had already decided to go to Chicago. Vivekananda spoke at the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society Adyar and visited Olcott to ask for a letter of introduction for the Parliament of the World's Religions. Olcott replied that he would help Vivekananda only if the latter presented himself as an official member of the Society. Vivekananda, who was against existing reform organisations due to his belief of their inherent inefficiency and his desire to build his own mission, rejected the offer.

Olcott's posture provoked the monk's life-long antagonism against the Theosophical Society.<sup>161</sup> Vivekananda developed two main criticisms against the organisation. First, he repudiated its demands for membership. For the international stage of the Parliament, Olcott arranged to send four delegates to represent Indian religions. These included Annie Besant as the special delegate, Dharmapala as the spokesperson of Ceylon Buddhists, C. N. Chakravarti as the delegate for Hinduism, and William Judge to represent Olcott and the Adyar

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<sup>157</sup> Mark Bevir, 'Theosophy as a Political Movement', in *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India*, ed. Antony Copley (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159–79; Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); for a less flattering view, see M.S.S. Pandian, *Brahmin and Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of the Tamil Political Present* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007).

<sup>158</sup> Bevir, 'Theosophy', 160; 173–174.

<sup>159</sup> Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, 8.

<sup>160</sup> Id., 74.

<sup>161</sup> This point will be further discussed in the next section.

Theosophical Society.<sup>162</sup> Olcott had even written Dharmapala's speeches.<sup>163</sup> Vivekananda despised the white man's attempt to orchestrate and speak for South Asian religions. As he had famously preached against Christian missionaries, India already possessed ample spirituality; it needed material support, not religion. Furthermore, as he saw spirituality as the essence of India's nationhood, embracing Theosophy, a belief originating from America led by a group of western charlatans (or so he thought of them), meant losing faith in one's own nation. After all, he insisted that 'the only claim [India] ha[d] to be recognized by the world [was] [her] religion'.<sup>164</sup> Thus, while applauding Annie Besant's dedication to India, he repeatedly emphasised, 'joining the Society of the Theosophist [was] another' matter.<sup>165</sup>

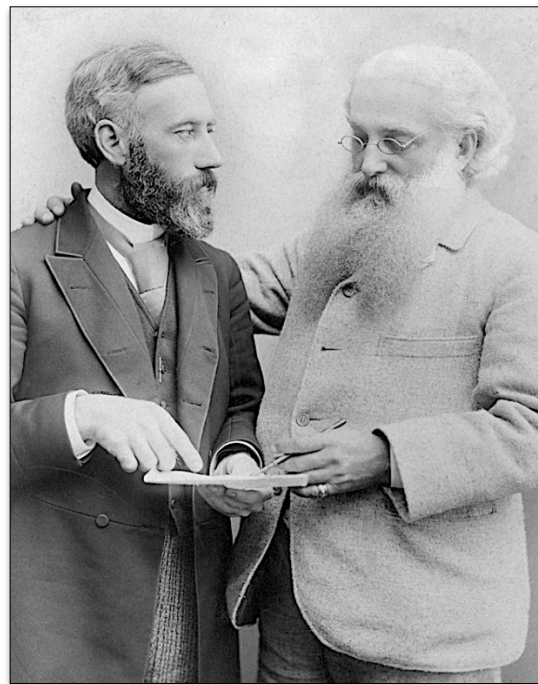


Image 3. William Judge and Henry Olcott, undated.<sup>166</sup>

His second objection against the Theosophical Society revolved around its core ideas of esoteric spirituality. On the stage of the Parliament, Vivekananda dismissed the possibility of séances and magical power, and presented his Hinduism as purely based on logic and reason.<sup>167</sup> In an interview conducted after the Parliament, he rejected one of the core

<sup>162</sup> William W. Emilsen, 'Vivekananda and the Theosophists', *Journal of Indian History* 62 (1984), 205.

<sup>163</sup> Olcott's Diary (Col.), roll 5. Sr No. 642, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Archive, New Delhi, India.

<sup>164</sup> Vivekananda to Haridas Viharidas Desai, 15 November 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 58.

<sup>165</sup> Vivekananda, *CWSV*, vol. 3, 208.

<sup>166</sup> 'Col. Olcott's Disloyalty to H.P. Blavatsky', *Blavatsky Theosophy Group, UK*, <https://blavatskytheosophy.com/col-olcotts-disloyalty-to-h-p-blavatsky/> (accessed, 10 June 2017).

<sup>167</sup> This will be more fully discussed in Chapter 4.

philosophies of Theosophy, the existence of Mahatmas in the Himalayas, by simply stating, ‘though I am at home in the Himalayas, I have yet to come across them’.<sup>168</sup>

Vivekananda’s repudiation of the Himalayan Mahatma was not based on his doubts on the existence of a ‘super human’. On the contrary, his own project was to render Ramakrishna into the ‘real’ Mahatma.<sup>169</sup> He collaborated with Müller in this task, by supplying relevant sources for the latter’s book on Ramakrishna published in 1898. Although Vivekananda had little patience with the Theosophists’ occultism, in his own project he often vested supernatural power on Ramakrishna. As we saw in his earlier letters, he tried to render Ramakrishna into an all-knowing Avatara. To Müller, he narrated a story of a fairy bestowing the knowledge of Sanskrit on the illiterate monk. Thus, Vivekananda’s dismissal of the Theosophical Society’s Himalayan Mahatma was not an attack against the magical principle itself. Rather, it was a defence for the only true Mahatma, Ramakrishna, against the one fabricated by a group of western eccentrics.

Vivekananda’s battle against Theosophical Society in Adyar also involved factional politics. During the Theosophical Society’s split in 1895 between its American branch led by William Judge and the Indian branch headed by Olcott and Besant, Vivekananda advised his followers in India to garner support from the American branch. Commanding Alasinga to not disclose his letter, he suggested:

Theosophists are our pioneers, do you know? Now Judge is a Hindu and [Olcott] a Buddhist, and Judge is the ablest man here. Now tell the Hindu Theosophists to support Judge. Even if you can write Judge a letter, thanking him as a co-religionist and for his labours in presenting Hinduism before Americans, that will do his heart much good. We must not join any sect, but we must sympathize and work with each other.<sup>170</sup>

The Judge scandal sprang from the revelation of his forged ‘Mahatma’ documents. By inventing letters from the dead Blavatsky, Judge had tried to grab power over the Theosophical Society. Given Vivekananda’s revulsion against the Theosophical Society’s usage of the term ‘Mahatma’, his endorsement of Judge may at first appear hypocritical. But this was a strategic move. It reflected Vivekananda’s agenda to reclaim Madras from Olcott and his acolytes. Although he expressed camaraderie during the Society’s transnational feud, in truth, he wanted

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<sup>168</sup> ‘Hindus at the World’s Fair’, *The Indian Mirror*, 11 November 1893, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in News Papers*, 2.

<sup>169</sup> ‘A Real Mahatman’, Max Müller, 6, 10 September 1897, *The Indian Mirror*, Id., 109-117.

<sup>170</sup> Vivekananda to Alasinga, 11 July 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 128.

to remove the Adyar branch of the Theosophical Society from the subcontinent altogether. He only supported the American branch in the hope that it would replace, and absorb, its Adyar counterpart. He shared this goal to one of his western friends. Had he not fallen ill, he wrote, 'I would have cleared India ... of these upstart humbugs ... let me tell you that India is already Ramakrishna's and for a purified Hinduism I have organised my work here'.<sup>171</sup>

In this letter, Vivekananda expressed his hostility towards the Theosophical Society in territorial language. He targeted the fact that Theosophical Society's location played a significant role in building its credibility. James Santucci has argued that rooting itself in India proved the Society's universality and its expertise on 'Hindu spirituality'.<sup>172</sup> After all, its International Headquarters opened in Adyar, Madras, in 1882 after establishing its first Indian branch in Bombay in 1879. It thrived in Madras.<sup>173</sup> M. S. S. Pandian suggests that it served as the 'bastion of Brahminic Hinduism' and instigated 'a network of other organisations' that promoted 'Brahminical Hinduism'.<sup>174</sup> Its attraction, particularly under Besant's leadership, reached beyond Madras and drew in prominent political elites from across India. According to Van der Veer, many Indian nationalists associated with the Theosophical Society, which served as a nexus of 'public sphere[s] of voluntary associations [and] debating clubs' that opened 'highly critical' discussions on 'both the colonial government and Christianity'.<sup>175</sup> Thus, rooted in Madras, the Theosophical Society spread its branches across the subcontinent and abroad.

As Vivekananda saw Madras as an important location in strengthening his legitimacy within his religious Order, the Theosophical Society represented a real threat and challenge. Promising one of his Madras followers that he would send money regularly, Vivekananda commanded in a letter written in 1894, 'start a Society and a journal and the necessary apparatus'.<sup>176</sup> He added,

This must be a secret amongst only a few — but at the same time try to collect funds from Mysore and elsewhere to build a temple in Madras, which should have a library and some rooms for the office and the preachers who would be

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<sup>171</sup> Vivekananda to Sara Ole Bull, 5 May 1897, *CWSV*, vol.7, 506.

<sup>172</sup> Santucci, 'Theosophy', 239-240.

<sup>173</sup> The Theosophical Society also wielded much political influence in Ceylon. Mphil Thesis: Anona Williams, 'Parallel and Divergent Histories: A Transnational Comparative Study of Hindu Religious Movements, with Particular Reference to Arumuga Nvalar and Dayananda Saraswati', unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Cambridge (June 2012).

<sup>174</sup> Pandian, *Brahmin and Non-Brahmin*, 50, 51.

<sup>175</sup> Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, 76.

<sup>176</sup> Vivekananda to Alasinga, 31 August 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 135.



Sannyasins, and for *vairagis* (men of renunciation) who may chance to come.  
... give the society a non-sectarian name.<sup>177</sup>

As the letter indicates, he sought to infiltrate Madras. He succeeded. He established a Math there in 1897, and his first two journals, *Prabuddha Bharata* and *Vedanta Kesari*, both started in Madras, although the former shifted to Mayavati and Bengal in 1898. Given the Theosophical Society's prominence in Madras including its publishing house, Vivekananda's designation of Madras as the birthplace for his own publications indicate a strategic move to counter the influence of the Society in the region. He further tried to knit Madras with Bengal, as he advised his Bengal disciples to 'work in unison with the people of Madras, and ... go there at intervals'.<sup>178</sup>

Vivekananda's dalliance with the Arya Samaj and his 'savage bitterness' towards the Theosophical Society, to borrow Olcott's words, resulted from rivalry.<sup>179</sup> As Vivekananda wrote to his *gurubhai* Ramakrishnananda in 1894, such inward-looking 'pride in [the] monastic order' had its 'utility during the first stages'.<sup>180</sup> Van der Veer's influential work notwithstanding, Vivekananda and Olcott developed mutual disdain, not despite, but precisely *because* of their agreement on the importance of Hindu spirituality in the making of the Indian nation.

Vivekananda's envisioned geography of an India united under one spirituality remained intact throughout his life.<sup>181</sup> As the ensuing section will show, when he returned to the subcontinent in 1897, he evoked the same sources of patronage, albeit in varying languages, to unite the nation behind his own mission.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Vivekananda to Shashi Sanyal, 1895, Id., 203.

<sup>179</sup> 'Henry Olcott's Letter to the Editor of the Indian Mirror', *Indian Mirror*, 12 March 1897, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Newspapers*, 182.

<sup>180</sup> Vivekananda to Swami Ramakrishnananda, 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 86.

<sup>181</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda*, 273. Even a year before his death he planned to tour Gujarat, Bombay, Poona, Hyderabad, Mysore and Madras.

## Vivekananda's 'Plan of Campaign'

After three and a half years and extensive tours across America and Europe, Vivekananda landed in Pamban on 6 February 1897. From there he began his journey back to Calcutta, and finally to Almora. Each destination awaited him with a public reception hosted by a self-proclaimed 'Hindu community'. Welcome speeches replete with gratitude commemorated his entry to the (local) 'motherland', and many venues immediately recorded the event by erecting a statue or constructing a building named after him. The bungalow where Vivekananda greeted his audience in Colombo became the Vivekananda Lodge, while in Pamban the Raja of Ramnad erected a monument to commemorate the 'first spot in India visited by Vivekananda'.<sup>182</sup> Soon, each location of his sojourn itself became a site of pilgrimage, attracting men of every 'stations in life'.<sup>183</sup> A detailed account published 1897 titled *Colombo to Almora* captured every moment. With such wide-spread glorification, the once unknown *parivrājaka* became 'His Holiness', the revered 'Srimat Vivekananda', and the 'Worshipful Swami'.<sup>184</sup>

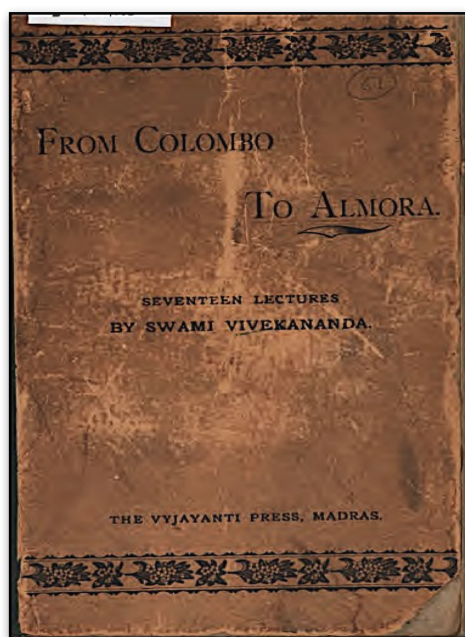


Image 4. The Cover of *From Colombo to Almora*.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>182</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora* (Madras: The Vyjayanti Press, 1897), 54.

<sup>183</sup> Henrietta Mueller, who wrote the preface to the first edition of the book, also described the sight of welcome receptions as resembling sites of pilgrimage. See for instance, Id., 4; Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many of the places Vivekananda stayed have turned into a Math and Mission. See 'Addresses and Activities of the Branches', *Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*, <http://www.belurmath.org/centres/branchcentres.htm> (accessed 17 May 2017).

<sup>184</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 20, 22.

<sup>185</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, *Internet Archive*, <http://archive.org> (accessed 5 February 2014).

While every reception commemorated Vivekananda's achievements, each location celebrated its distinct relationship with the monk. A strong sense of parochial patriotism, or loyalty and pride in the patria, emerged at each event. Each reception committee claimed to represent its Hindu community or the 'citizens' of its local 'motherland'. The brother of the Raja of Ramnad, Raja Dinakara Sethupathi, greeted Vivekananda with the statement, 'we the inhabitants of this ancient and historic Samasthanam of Seth Bandha Rameswar, beg, most cordially, welcome you to this, our motherland'.<sup>186</sup> In Calcutta, the welcome speech emphasised similar municipal patriotism through the language of kinship. The *Indian Mirror* differentiated Calcutta from the southern states, stating that Calcutta treated Vivekananda as a brother coming home rather than a holy man visiting the region.<sup>187</sup>

Vivekananda responded in kind. In Calcutta, he reminisced about his childhood and attributed his success to his mentor, the sage Ramakrishna. In Pamban, he directed all his accomplishments to the Raja of Ramnad without making a single remark on the Bengali saint. Given that Vivekananda endeavoured to create a bridge between Madras and Bengal, his diverse responses to each regional audience do not seem merely opportunistic. The striking differences in the ways he presented himself in Pamban, Madras, and Calcutta, and their varying receptions indicate that Vivekananda did not simply promote a nebulous 'national' project. From evoking tropes of honour in the *rajadharma* tradition to calling on the revolutionary spirit of Bengali youths, Vivekananda acutely recognised the various registers of politics emerging across the subcontinent. When he returned to India as Vivekananda, the renowned representative of Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions, he attempted to create his own national project by speaking in different social and political registers.

His first port of call within India, Pamban, symbolised Vivekananda's Indian princely patronage. As we saw in the introduction of this chapter, Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi welcomed Vivekananda with a lavish ceremony. He prostrated himself in front of the Swami, and relinquished his seat on the state carriage for the monk. The Raja then led the procession on foot. Similar inversions of hierarchy littered the speeches dedicated to Vivekananda. Sethupathi and the members of his court presented themselves as the monk's 'most devoted and obedient disciples and servants' and emphasised their 'hearts full of sincerest affection, greatest reverence, and highest admiration'.<sup>188</sup> The general tenor of the reception highlighted the national and political significance of Vivekananda's performance in the West. It celebrated

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<sup>186</sup> Id., 56.

<sup>187</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 18 March 1897, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Newspapers*, 184-185.

<sup>188</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 57.

Vivekananda's achievements in de-mystifying Hinduism in the 'master-minds of the West' and in awakening the 'apathetic sons and daughters of India'.<sup>189</sup> Curiously, the inscription of the monument marking Vivekananda's visit honoured another value. Instead of crediting Vivekananda's feat to his patriotism, it pointed towards his altruistic character. It read:

Sathyamiva Jayathi [sic.]. This monument erected by Bhaskara Sethupathy the Raja of Ramnad marks the sacred spot where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda's blessed feet first trod on Indian soil together with the English disciples of His Holiness' return from the Western Hemisphere, where glorious and unprecedented success attended His Holiness' *philanthropic labours* to spread the religion of the Vedanta.<sup>190</sup>

Here, the words 'philanthropic labours' require further analysis. Many of the Indian newspapers interpreted Vivekananda's performance at the Parliament and the sight of his 'English disciples' as a mark of his spiritual conquest over the West. As we will see in Chapter 4, even the chairman of the Parliament of the World's Religions, John Henry Barrows, and several orthodox Christian missionaries, strove to dismiss this narrative before it gained momentum in the East. However, the inscription in Pamban replaced any sentiment of aggressive triumphalism with a spirit of altruism.

The younger raja, Dinakara Sethupathi, further emphasised Vivekananda's selflessness. Arguing that Vivekananda's 'philanthropic labours' came as the result of his 'considerable self-sacrifice', he concluded that it was Vivekananda's 'disinterested impulse' that motivated him to 'cross boundless seas'.<sup>191</sup> In doing so, Vivekananda demonstrated to the world that Hinduism catered 'to the temperament needs of men and women of all races and creeds'.<sup>192</sup> Hinduism had shown what it had to offer to the whole of human race.

Vivekananda himself also elaborated on this expansive moral geography of Hinduism in his response to the Raja. He first asserted that India was 'the mother-land of philosophy, and of spirituality, of ethics, and of sweetness, gentleness, and human love'.<sup>193</sup> It surpassed 'all the nations in the world in these respects'.<sup>194</sup> India's spiritual power, he insisted, must extend to the world 'to teach other nations'.<sup>195</sup> While many late colonial reformers of Hinduism and nationalists shared this idea of inundating the world with Indian spirituality or exchanging it

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<sup>189</sup> Id., 57.

<sup>190</sup> Id., 54. Emphasis added.

<sup>191</sup> Id., 56.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Id., 59.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

with western materiality, Vivekananda anchored this idea in the political ethics of ‘old patriotism’, specifically, directed at Sethupathi.<sup>196</sup>

C. A. Bayly argued that Indian nationalism was neither an adoption of the European model nor a simple reaction to British rule. Rather, it ‘drew-upon and recasted’ pre-colonial notions of patriotism, or, ‘old patriotism’.<sup>197</sup> Old patriotism used climactic and bodily metaphors to categorise people, regions, and political ethics.<sup>198</sup> Late colonial Indian nationalists of various proclivities, from Bipin Chandra Pal to Gandhi, continued to use humoural themes to describe the condition of India under the British rule. In essence, ‘old patriotism’, as presented by Bayly, indicates a continuation rather than revivalism or re-invention of existing traditions. In a similar line, *rajadharma* or duty of a king also carried on practices of old patriotism. As Price and Ramusack have shown, Indian princes often resorted to *rajadharma* to exert the ‘assertion of their territories, expansion of their territory and legitimisation of their claims to sovereignty and kingship’.<sup>199</sup> In the case of Sethupathi, we have seen that his kingship entailed performances of traditional role of a king combined with attuning to and utilising public opinion. In particular, his image as a *vallal*, a generous king, constituted one of the main characteristics of his governance.

Vivekananda idealised Sethupathi in similar terms. Thanking Sethupathi for his ‘love towards [himself]’, Vivekananda declared, ‘If any good work has been done by me and through me, every bit of India owes to this great man ... for it was he that conceived the idea of my going to Chicago ... put that idea into my head and persistently urged me on to accomplish it’.<sup>200</sup> Sethupathi, ‘intuitively understood’ the importance of India’s role in the world and sent Vivekananda to the Parliament to represent Hinduism. The Raja’s love for his subjects, his patria, and his concern ‘in all affairs, oriental or occidental’ stood as the testament of his *dharmic* rule and rendered him an ideal king.<sup>201</sup> Vivekananda further cemented this idea by concluding, ‘I wish there were half a dozen more such Rajas to take interest in our dear motherland and work for her amelioration in the spiritual line.’<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> For this idea, see C. A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> On this subject, see Bayly, *Origins*, 63-97. Also see Kumkum Chatterjee, ‘History as Self-Representation: The Recasting of Tradition in Late Eighteenth-Century Eastern India’, *Modern Asian Studies* 32:4 (1998): 913–48; Muzaffar Alam, ‘The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics’, *Modern Asian Studies* 32: 2 (1998), 317–49.

<sup>199</sup> Ramusack, *The Indian Princes*, 4.

<sup>200</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 58.

<sup>201</sup> Id., 51.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

In their speeches, Sethupathi and Vivekananda presented their relationship of patronage to the public through the discourse of ethical governance. Both presented their achievements through emotive vocabulary. The Raja's 'love' for his subject and patria sent Vivekananda to America, and Vivekananda's 'philanthropic labours' conquered the West with Indian spirituality, rather than his hyper-masculinity or spiritual clout. Vivekananda's speech was replete with humoural metaphors. He described the 'essence' of India through virtues rooted in the soil and the land. India was the motherland of 'spirituality, of ethics, and of sweetness, gentleness, and human love'.<sup>203</sup> Lastly, this virtuous motherland governed by an ideal king, Raja of Ramnad, had to expand her moral geography beyond the subcontinent to govern humanity. If in imperial imagination civility and barbarity unfolded over geographical space — whether imported from the metropole to the colony, or lined up in the evolutionary scale of barbarism (East) to civility (West) — through their shared discourse, Vivekananda and the Raja created a new direction of righteous governance through Hinduism.

While in Pamban the overall reception took a royal tone, in Madras the event echoed a strong note of social reform. Here, the reception committee presented themselves as 'Hindu Co-religionists', which included the members of Vidvat Vaidika Sabha, the Social Reform Association of Madras, as well as Henry Olcott and a few other members of the Theosophical Society.<sup>204</sup> Unlike the grand darbar-esque procession offered to Vivekananda in Pamban, the Madras reception committee declared their gathering as not a 'performance of any merely formal or ceremonial function', but as an offering of 'the love of our hearts and to give our feelings of thankfulness for [Vivekananda's] services'.<sup>205</sup> This gratitude was a response to Vivekananda's selection of Madras as the location for his first journal, *Prabuddha Bharata*, and as the main support basis for his trip to Chicago.

Vivekananda replicated the general tone and introduced his plan to the public for the first time in Madras. While the reception included the address of Maharaja Ajit Singh of Khetri, recited by his secretary, Munshi Jagamohan Lal, Vivekananda stated, 'the kings are gone', and shifted his inspiration from a native ruler to divine providence.<sup>206</sup> He explained his decision to attend the Parliament not as the will of a raja, or himself, or the people of Madras, but as that of 'the God of India who is guiding her destiny'.<sup>207</sup> God's agenda included sending 'hundreds

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<sup>203</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 59.

<sup>204</sup> Olcott's attendance was rather strategic. See Chapter 4.

<sup>205</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 116.

<sup>206</sup> *Id.*, 130.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

of such to all the nations of the world', and Vivekananda was the messenger of this plan, as he said, 'I have come to you, my children, to tell you all my plans'.<sup>208</sup> Through this patronage, he positioned himself above the audience, amongst whom sat Olcott.

In this provocative speech titled, 'My Plan of Campaign', Vivekananda introduced his national mission by juxtaposing it against the Theosophical Society and the Brahmo Samaj. As we will see in Chapter 3, after the Parliament, these two reform organisations publicly challenged Vivekananda's authenticity and legitimacy. Thus, to his Madras audience, Vivekananda first exonerated himself from the accusations charged by the two institutions. He described their allegation as an act of betrayal. He explained that given his dedication to serve the nation, these organisations' counter-propaganda signified their unpatriotic spirit. He supported this theory by underlining the existing organisations' shortcomings. Drawing on abolition as an example, Vivekananda argued that reform organisations 'condemned the society' by merely reacting to the Christian missionary's critiques on Hinduism.<sup>209</sup> They strove to 'reform only little bits', reaching only the first two castes, thus, proving to be merely 'ornamental'.<sup>210</sup> Furthermore, these organisations perpetuated hierarchy. They submitted their members under the institutions' rules and hegemony. As such, they shackled the individual rather than leading them to liberation, spiritual or social. In contrast, he advocated a 'root-and-branch reform', taking the form of 'construction' and 'growth' through self-empowerment, rather than through 'destruction'.<sup>211</sup>

Although Sumit Sarkar has interpreted Vivekananda's vituperation as his inability to 'accept ... aestheticized celebration of difference', it was a specific attack targeted at the Theosophical Society.<sup>212</sup> As we have seen, Vivekananda viewed the Theosophical Society as another form of foreign domination. By asserting that 'occultism and mysticism *come* to us', he signalled that these two alien '-isms' originated from outside.<sup>213</sup> 'These creepy things', he continued, 'have nearly destroyed [the Indians]', and only accentuated the weakness of his people.<sup>214</sup> To overcome this, he proposed that he planned 'to start institutions in India, to train our young men as preachers of the truths of our scriptures in India and outside India'.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Id., 123.

<sup>209</sup> Id., 129.

<sup>210</sup> Id., 126.

<sup>211</sup> Id., 127.

<sup>212</sup> Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, 354.

<sup>213</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 139.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

Given that his criticism against existing social reform groups targeted their structure of organisation and institutionalisation, his claim to create one of his own may appear ironic. After all, he had claimed that ‘we have had lectures enough, society enough, papers enough’.<sup>216</sup> The main difference, however, lay in its leadership. He presented Ramakrishna as the man ‘who will lend us a hand to drag us out ... the man who really loves us ... The man who has sympathy for us’.<sup>217</sup> As a disciple of that man, Vivekananda argued he would usher the nation into its next stage of progress and fashioned himself as a ‘greater reformer than any one of [existing reformers]’.<sup>218</sup> He saw Madras as the right place for such kind of ‘reform’.<sup>219</sup> Its people prized ‘steady and slow progress ... Growth, and not reaction’ like the Bengali reformers.<sup>220</sup> With the help of the ‘strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone’, Vivekananda foretold the growth of India through his ‘man-making religion’, ‘man-making theories’, and ‘man-making education’.<sup>221</sup>

If Vivekananda fashioned himself as a true social reformer in Madras, in Calcutta he presented himself as a boy returning home. Even the reception gathered a different kind of crowd. Rather than being led by existing social organisations or under the auspices of a single raja and his court, the hosts and chairs of the ‘Vivekananda Committee’ included Maharaja Bahadur of Darbhanga, Raja Sri Radhakant Deb Bahadur, and Raja Benoy Krishna Bahadur, as well as a group of notable *bhadraloks*.<sup>222</sup>

The mode of addressing Vivekananda also strikingly contrasted with other receptions. Beginning with ‘dear brother’, the welcome speech accentuated intimacy rooted in the more parochial *desh* (land) of Bengal. It repeatedly drew out references to his familiarity with the region, including Vivekananda’s relationship with Ramakrishna. Welcoming him ‘to the land of [his] birth’, the speech thanked Vivekananda for honouring ‘our religion ... our country and ... our province in particular’.<sup>223</sup> Unlike Madras’ glorification of Vivekananda, Calcutta simply greeted the returning monk as a family member.<sup>224</sup>

Vivekananda reciprocated this intimacy in his speeches. If in the southern states, he had insisted the audience to accept him as a ‘begging Sannyasi’ rather than ‘a great politician’, in

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<sup>216</sup> Id., 127.

<sup>217</sup> Id., 129.

<sup>218</sup> Id., 127.

<sup>219</sup> Id., 126.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Chapter 5 will discuss these slogans further.

<sup>222</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 225.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 18 March 1897, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Newspapers*, 184-185.



Calcutta he declared that he stood in front of his ‘brothers’ ‘not as a sannyasi, no not even as a preacher, but ... the same Calcutta boy to talk to you as I used to’.<sup>225</sup> He expressed himself using familial vocabulary, such as ‘family ties’, ‘love’, ‘brothers’, and ‘this motherland of ours’, referring specifically to Bengal, rather than ‘my countrymen, my friends, my children’ as he had addressed the audience in other parts of India.<sup>226</sup>

As he relegated himself to this boyish role, he pushed Ramakrishna to the fore. Ramakrishna, whom he introduced as ‘my master, my hero, my ideal, my God in life’, was the main force behind his ideas as well as of India’s regeneration.<sup>227</sup> If he ascribed all his efforts to the Raja of Ramnad in Pamban, he gave the same role to Ramakrishna in Calcutta. Echoing his previous statement, he insisted, ‘If there has been anything achieved by me, by thoughts, or words, or deeds, if from my lips ever has fallen one word that has helped anyone in the world I lay no claim to it, it was his.’<sup>228</sup> Asserting that political or social ideals have no impact in India, he argued:

We want spiritual ideals before us, we want enthusiastically to gather round grand spiritual names. Our heroes must be spiritual. Such a hero has been given unto us in the person of Ramakrishna Paramhansa. If this nation wants to rise, take my word, it will have to come enthusiastically round this name.<sup>229</sup>

This method of galvanising the crowd into collective action around a spiritual hero struck a chord with the revolutionary spirit simmering in Bengal. The famous lines for which scholars have rendered Vivekananda into a nationalist, ‘arise, awake, and stop not till the desired end is reached’, were uttered to the public in his Calcutta speech.<sup>230</sup> He immersed this speech with words instigating action, aggression, sacrifice, and death. He presented his plan in a definitive dichotomy of ‘either/or’: ‘We must conquer the world or die. There is no other alternative. The sign of life is expansion; we must go out, expand, show life, or degrade, fester, and die. There is no other alternative. Take either of these, either live or die.’<sup>231</sup>

The imagery of death and sacrifice appeared most prominently in connection with the Calcutta youth. The country required ‘tremendous sacrifice’ from the ‘energetic, strong, well-

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<sup>225</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 228.

<sup>226</sup> Id., 229.

<sup>227</sup> Id., 232.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Id., 235.

<sup>230</sup> Id., 238.

<sup>231</sup> Id., 236.

built, intellectual' youth.<sup>232</sup> He argued that Calcutta could provide such enthusiastic youths by 'hundreds and thousands'.<sup>233</sup> He explained, 'in other parts of India, there is intellect, there is money, but enthusiasm is only in my motherland. That must come out, and, therefore, arise young men of Calcutta, with enthusiasm in your blood'.<sup>234</sup> Unlike in Madras, where he encouraged renouncing worldly attachment — of wealth or privilege, in Calcutta he advocated for corporeal sacrifice. He goaded his audience to embrace death. Narrating the story of Nachiketa who, with his exemplary *Sraddha*, 'waited at the house of Death for three days', Vivekananda called the young audience to brace themselves for the cause of the motherland, and enter the 'house of Death'.<sup>235</sup>

In these three locations, thus, Vivekananda employed three distinct lexicons of patriotism. Of course, the different environment of princely states and provinces limited the scope of his messages to an extent. Nonetheless, from ethical governance and social reform to revolution, Vivekananda catered to the specific social and political circumstances of each region. He also promoted patriotism around a leader in all his speeches. In Pamban, he idealised the Raja of Ramnad. In Madras, he put himself forward as the true reformer. In Bengal, he returned as a long-lost brother to galvanise the youth under Ramakrishna. In these ways, he altered the vocabulary of his plan to knit the Madras Presidency with Bengal. By tying his project to various forms of patriotism flourishing in the subcontinent, Vivekananda sought to create a national movement representative of the diverse terrains of India that he once explored as a *parivrājak*.

## Conclusion

Once Vivekananda boarded the S. S. Empress from Bombay in May 1893, the palpable vulnerability that drenched his early letters to his patrons evaporated. Instead, a conspicuously masculine voice emerged in his letters to his disciples. He wrote to Alasinga on the boat, 'Come, be men! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march! Do you love man? Do you love your country? Then come, let us not struggle for

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<sup>232</sup> Id., 238.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Id., 239; We will further examine this message in Chapter 5.

higher and better things.’<sup>236</sup> Renouncing the desire for ‘higher and better things’ and embarking on a journey was a patriotic act as well as a pathway to manhood. For Vivekananda, it was directly linked to empowerment.

K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, who saw Vivekananda the *parivrājak* in Travancore, remarked on the stark differences between the monk in 1892 and in 1897. He reminisced that in 1892, Vivekananda ‘looked like one who had a tryst with destiny and was not quite sure when or where or how he was to keep that tryst’.<sup>237</sup> On the other hand, in 1897 he seemed to ‘clearly kn[o]w his mission, and ... was confident about its fulfillment. He walked with steady and unfaltering steps ... issuing commands and being sure of loyal obedience’.<sup>238</sup> Having tapped into a larger network of patronage, the self-confessed ‘imaginative boy’ of the Ramakrishna’s spiritual household returned as a commanding virile Swami, ready to accept the royal reception.

Analysing Vivekananda’s *parivrājak* phase using a spatial framework has allowed us to see his wandering years not as preliminary, but as seminal. These years did not simply expose him to poverty and inspire his *seva*, but also outlined the territories in which he sought to anchor himself and from which he drew his authority. Unlike Dayananda, Vivekananda travelled far beyond Rajasthan and reached out to small *thikanas* scattered across the subcontinent. He used both intimacy and public gestures to build relationships with various Indian princes. By confessing his weaknesses, and through the politics of *khilat*, Narendranath adopted a new identity as a turban-wearing Vivekananda. By publicly celebrating the patronage of Wodeyar X and Sethupathi, Vivekananda accessed the elites in Mysore and Madras. His extensive survey and interest in southern India was also reflected in his dalliance with the Arya Samajists and hostility against Olcott. As his varied replies to the welcome receptions indicate, the same geographies of spirituality remained crucial in Vivekananda’s national project. As such, Vivekananda as a *parivrajak* cannot be temporally confined to a specific set of years within the subcontinent. The process of Narendranath’s becoming of Vivekananda was shaped by space as much as by time. Indeed, his popularity across the various social spaces in India signals the appeal of a self-fashioned ascetic to the nationalists in this era. He prefigures in important and interesting ways the national ‘mahatma’, who would only emerge at the height of independence movement.

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<sup>236</sup> Vivekananda to Alasinga, 10 July 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 37.

<sup>237</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *Reminiscences*, 103.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

# CHAPTER TWO

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## REPRESENTATION AND SPACES OF SOVEREIGNTY AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION AND THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS (CHICAGO, 1893)

In 1894 and 1895, the *Indian Mirror* published two letters by the renowned American religious scholar, Merwin-Marie Snell. Both addressed the subject of the second Parliament of the World's Religions, proposed to be held in Benares in 1897. The first letter, published on 1 September 1894, pressed 'the native princes and societies of India' to 'bear the expenses of the coming Parliament'.<sup>1</sup> The second letter, written to Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee, explained the urgent need for India's leadership of the event:

I am very anxious for the sake of Hinduism, and of the whole religious world[,] that interest in Swami Vivekananda's work should take the vigorous effort on the part of the people of India, and specially the followers of five-fold Veda, to bring about and *control* the proposed Second World's Parliament of Religions to be held at Benares or Allahabad. As the Protestants were the hosts on the former occasion, the Hindus should be this time, being in majority in India. If they do not begin to organise for this end at once, the same Christian set, *will come over* and *control* this one from the start. Please agitate this matter, and bring it into general consideration among the religious leaders of the Aryan Indians.<sup>2</sup>

Drenched in territorial metaphors, Snell's letters imparted political significance to the much-anticipated second Parliament. India had to both host and 'control' the international event.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 1 September 1894, in Merwin-Marie Snell, Sankari Prasad Basu and Sunil Bihari Ghosh (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers, 1893-1902* (Calcutta: Basu Bhattacharyya, 1969), 40.

<sup>2</sup> *The Indian Mirror* 17 January 1895, Id., 241. Emphasis added.

Otherwise, Snell suggested, ‘the same Christian set’ would ‘come over’ and usurp the Parliament.

This analogy, hinting at the colonial condition of India, also projected a distinctly ‘Asian’ geography. From its inception, the idea was that the sequel to the original Parliament should take place in the ‘East’, and this gained momentum amongst idealists such as Paul Carus and the Japanese and Indian delegates who had attended the Parliament in 1893. When Benares fell through, the location moved to Japan to be held in conjunction with the Osaka Exhibition of 1902.

According to a 1902 letter in *The Bengalee* written from Japan, Vivekananda was the inspiration behind the venue’s relocation.<sup>3</sup> This letter from Japan is particularly interesting, for it bound together India and Japan through the said Parliament and Vivekananda. Mourning the death of the monk, which occurred in 1902, the letter lamented, ‘weeping with the whole of India over the great *national* loss *we* suffered, we threw up all hope of a Parliament of Oriental Religions’.<sup>4</sup> The clear affiliation of ‘we’ and the commiseration of the ‘national’ suffering resembles the anti-western geography of Pan-Asianism, which would take off — and quickly wither away — in the first half of the twentieth century. Like Pan-Asianism itself, which remained a discursive unit rather than a political paradigm (as shown by Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné), the second Parliament failed to manifest until 1993 in Chicago.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, this effort to organise an international religious gathering in Benares and Osaka urges us to re-think the original Parliament within the history of internationalism rather than merely as a ‘liberal, western, and American quest for world religious unity that failed’, as John P. Burris has argued.<sup>6</sup>

The 1893 Parliament of the World’s Religions was one of a series of international conferences overseen by the World Congress Auxiliary of the Columbian Exposition.<sup>7</sup> Under the leadership of a staunch Swedenborgian, Charles Carroll Bonney, who was the president of the International Law and Order League and a counsellor of the Supreme Court of the United

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Japan Letter: No Religious Congress’, *The Bengalee*, 2 November 1902, Id., 282.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905-1940)’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54:1 (2012), 65–92.

<sup>6</sup> John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions, 1851-1893* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2001), xxviii.

<sup>7</sup> For more on the background of the Parliament, see Richard Hughes Seager, *The World’s Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago, 1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Neil Harris et al. (eds.), *Grand Illusions: Chicago’s World’s Fair of 1893* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993); Eric J. Ziolkowski (ed.), *A Museum of Faiths: Histories and Legacies of the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions* (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1993).

States, the World Congress Auxiliary insisted on presenting ‘something higher and nobler’ than the main fair.<sup>8</sup> With its motto of ‘Not things but men! Not matter but mind!’ it attempted to gather together a global public of experts hailing from across the world to address social issues such as education, ethics, world peace, and women’s rights.<sup>9</sup> Of its twenty congresses, the Parliament of the World’s Religions was, in the words of Bonney, the ‘culminating achievement’ and the ‘crowning event’.<sup>10</sup>



Image 5. Parliament of the World’s Religions, Chicago 1893.<sup>11</sup>

A congregation of ‘worshippers of God and lovers of man’, the Parliament was a novel international event. It invited leaders of the world’s ten ‘major’ religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — to discuss the role of religion in wider society. Although often perceived as a ‘Christian’ imperial event, the Parliament did not project an ordered representation of empire and colonies, as previous International Congresses of Orientalists had done throughout the

<sup>8</sup> Richard Hughes Seager (ed.), *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing, 1993), 4.

<sup>9</sup> This was the motto of the Congress Auxiliary. Cited in David F. Burg, *Chicago’s White City of 1893* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 283; More on the concept of the ‘global public’, see Valeska Huber and Jürgen Osterhammel (ed.), *Global Public: Its Power and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> Report of the President to the Board of Directors of the World’s Columbian Exposition (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1898), 329-333. Cited in Seager, *The World’s Parliament of Religions*, xx.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Chicago: General Information’, *Parliament of the World’s Religions*, <https://parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/chicago-1893> (accessed 07 October 2015).

nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Rather, in its emphasis on parliamentary spirit, and on the ‘authenticity’ of each representative, it left each participant to redraw the map of their own world.

From preparation to execution, the Parliament organisers aimed to replicate the diverse religious composition of the world. It had seventeen main organising committees, composed of various Christian denominations from Swedenborgians to Unitarians. In addition to the main committee, three thousand religious personalities from across the world served in the Advisory Council. Notable members from the West included Max Müller and Alfred Lord Tennyson, and from India, the editor of *The Hindu*, Ganapathy Subramania Iyer from Madras, and the American missionary Henry Ballantine from Bombay. The representatives of the Brahmo Samaj, B. B. Nagarkar and Protap Chandra Majumdar, also served as members of the Council.

It was the first international event of the nineteenth century to adopt the name ‘parliament’ rather than the more commonly used title ‘congress’. The choice of ‘parliament’, according to its chairman John Henry Barrows, summarised the ‘universality and cosmopolitan character of the event’ that attempted to create a ‘loving conference’ in a ‘parliamentary’ rather than ‘doctrinal’ spirit.<sup>13</sup>

This was a distinct departure from the International Congresses of Orientalists where Indian pundits served as accoutrements to British orientalist who acted as the guardians of ‘Indian knowledge’.<sup>14</sup> The oddity of the Parliament’s quest for ‘authenticity’ stands out even more when we think about India’s place in the League of Nations.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the League, at which, as Stephen Legg has shown, Indian representation was negotiated only to be silenced or exploited by the British, the Parliament offered an open stage to the representatives of Indian religions.<sup>16</sup> The story of Indian representation becomes even more intriguing, as the ‘creation’

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<sup>12</sup> More on this see, Filipa Lowndes Vincente, *Other Orientalisms: India Between Florence and Bombay, 1860-1900* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012); Timothy Mitchell, ‘Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order’, in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), 289–317.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Eleanor Barrows, *John Henry Barrows: A Memoir* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904), 274, 276.

<sup>14</sup> This will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>15</sup> On India and the League, see Stephen Legg, ‘An International Anomaly? Sovereignty, the League of Nations and India’s Princely Geographies’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 43 (2014), 96–110; Joseph McQuade, ‘Terrorism, Law, and Sovereignty in India and the League of Nations, 1897-1945’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge (2017). For the most recent scholarship on the League of Nations, see Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Anne-Isabelle Richard, ‘Competition and Complementarity: Civil Society Networks and the Question of Decentralizing the League of Nations’, *Journal of Global History* 7:2 (2012), 233-256.

<sup>16</sup> See Legg, ‘An International Anomaly?’, 98-101.

of India both at the Columbian Exposition and the Parliament depended on the support of Indian princes who seized upon the colonial state's indifference to both events. Thus, investigating Indian 'representation(s)' at the Parliament and the Exposition can provide new insights into our understanding of Vivekananda, as well as of internationalism outside the paradigm of *realpolitik*.

The ensuing three chapters undertake this task. They re-situate the Parliament within the history of internationalism by contextualising it within the Columbian Exposition. Taken together, these three chapters demonstrate that the Parliament was an alternative form of political, rather than simply 'spiritual', internationalism, within which Vivekananda emerged as the prime beneficiary. The current chapter closely examines politics of space and representation at the Exposition and the Parliament. If Chapter 1 mapped the wandering of Vivekananda to reveal the geography of spirituality, this chapter analyses the contained spaces of the Indian Pavilion and the representative space of Hinduism at the Parliament. Although the unit of analysis is seemingly confined to the physical site of the event, examining these spaces opens up views of transnational networks and territorialised power as they entered the international stage.

### **Exposition, Representation, and Internationalism: A Brief Historiography**

Despite their many differences, the Parliament and the main Exposition shared similarities. While on the surface the Parliament — particularly in its emphasis on 'Not things but men! Not matter but mind!' — seemed to reject the extravagance and materialism of the main Exposition, the organisers created the religious gathering to complement the Exposition and the mastery of commerce and material culture.

The parallels between the two events were evident in several ways. First, both the Parliament and the Exposition promoted strands of liberal ideals. The organisers and foreign commissioners of the Exposition perpetuated the language of world peace and friendship. Similarly, the religious delegates at the Parliament promoted universal brotherhood. Second, their 'representational spaces', to paraphrase Lefebvre, mirrored each other.<sup>17</sup> At the Parliament, the variety of costumes worn by the speakers provided an arresting display of diversity, leading its chairman John Henry Barrows to refer to it as an 'international exhibition

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<sup>17</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).



of religions'.<sup>18</sup> Scholars of religious studies have also employed concepts like 'museum' and 'exhibition' to analyse the event, as the titles of John Burris and Eric Ziolkowski's books, *Exhibiting Religion* and *A Museum of Faiths*, illustrate.<sup>19</sup> The Exposition, on the other hand, relied on metaphors of sacred and holy space. It accrued nicknames, such as the 'White City', 'New Jerusalem', 'Celestial City', and 'Great Mecca', which have generated further analysis in history of religions.<sup>20</sup> This inversion of the projected imagery of the two events, their roles, and their representational space, resulted partly from the fact that throughout the duration of the event, everyone — from organisers and visitors to the Parliament's religious delegates — moved freely between the two sites. Dharmapala famously joined Alfred Mommerie on the Ferris Wheel and marvelled at the grandeur of the Exposition.<sup>21</sup> Vivekananda entertained himself being mistaken as a 'Hindoo brahmin' or a prince at the Fair.<sup>22</sup> Thus people 'belonging' to one event experienced, and participated in, the other space.

Although physical and conceptual boundaries between the Parliament and the Exposition were porous, the entanglement of the Parliament and the main Exposition have yet to be fully analysed. The Parliament features in the scholarship on the Exposition as a cursory reference point, while in the literature on the Parliament, the main fair largely acts as a platform to briefly introduce the Parliament's background.<sup>23</sup>

Using spatial lenses combined with the issue of representation, this chapter departs from the usual perspectives that scholars of exhibitions have taken — that of the economy and race

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<sup>18</sup> John H. Barrows, *Christianity, the World-Religion: Lectures Delivered in India and Japan* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1897), 332.

<sup>19</sup> Burris, *Exhibiting Religion*; Ziolkowski (ed.), *A Museum of Faiths*.

<sup>20</sup> More on this see, Justin Nordstrom, 'Utopians at the Parliament: The World's Parliament of Religions and the Columbian Exposition of 1893', *Journal of Religious History* 33: 3 (2009), 348–65.

<sup>21</sup> On the conversation that Dharmapala had with Mommerie see Burris, *Exhibiting Religion*, 154.

<sup>22</sup> For Vivekananda's comments on the various misconceptions of his identity at the Exposition, see Vivekananda to Alasinga, 20 Aug 1893, in Swami Vivekananda, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta, 1964), 38, 40.

<sup>23</sup> On the Chicago Exposition see Burris, *Exhibiting Religion*; Gilbert, *Perfect Cities*; Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Harris et al., (eds.), *Grand Illusion*; Robert W. Rydell, Nancy E. Gwinn, and James Gilbert (eds.), *Fair Representations: World's Fairs and the Modern World* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994); Dennis B. Downey, *A Season of Renewal: The Columbian Exposition and Victorian America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002). On the Parliament see Seager (ed.), *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism*; Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions*; Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Dorothea Lüddeckens, *Das Weltparlament der Religionen von 1893: Strukturen interreligiöser Begegnung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin/Boston, 2002); Ziolkowski (ed.), *A Museum of Faiths*.

to name a few.<sup>24</sup> More specifically, it addresses two lacunae in the field that museologist Robert Rydell has highlighted in his ‘New Directions for Scholarship about World Expositions’.<sup>25</sup> First, it brings to light the importance of individuals whose ‘management or performance ... shape[d] the contested cultural landscapes of world expos’.<sup>26</sup> Second, it illustrates Rydell’s other point, ‘the jockeying of position between nations for appropriate space at world expos’.<sup>27</sup> By surveying the ways spaces for ‘national’ houses at the White City were contested, this chapter shows that the Exposition’s spatial arrangement mirrored conflicts between nations, and in the case of the India Pavilion, became an extension of ‘monarchical modernity’.<sup>28</sup> A similar point can be applied to the Parliament. The last section of this chapter illustrates the ways Vivekananda’s princely patrons projected ‘representational sovereignty’ onto an international platform.

This new approach allows us to also engage with literature on internationalism. The late nineteenth century has been marked as the height of internationalism of a specific kind — western, enlightened, and imperial.<sup>29</sup> ‘Internationalism’ broadly has been analysed either through supranational organisations or as an extension of networks and processes both affiliated and alternative to imperialism, all occurring in the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For economic perspective, see Robert W. Rydell, ‘New Directions for Scholarship About World Expos’, in *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith et al. (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2008), 21.8; Anthony David Edwards, *The Role of International Exhibitions in Britain 1850-1910: Perceptions of Economic Decline and the Technical Education Issue* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008). For racial hierarchy in exhibition culture, see Rydell, *All the World’s A Fair*; for disciplinary nature, see Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*.

<sup>25</sup> Robert W. Rydell, ‘New Directions for Scholarship about World Expos’, in *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith et al. (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2008), 21.1–21.13.

<sup>26</sup> Id., 21.4.

<sup>27</sup> Id., 21.5.

<sup>28</sup> Janaki Nair, *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region Under Princely Rule* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> For most recent work, see David Armitage, *Foundations of International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); David MacKenzie, *A World Beyond Borders: An Introduction to the History of International Organizations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009); Saul Dubow, ‘Smuts, the United Nations and the Rhetoric of Race and Rights’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 43: 1 (2008), 43–72. Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann (eds.), *The Mechanics of Internationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Concomitantly, India's place in 'the international' has been predominantly surveyed in the twentieth century through its 'anomalous' position at the League of Nations, crevices of imperial and international law, and the rising tide of Pan-Asianism in the inter-war period.<sup>31</sup> India's role in nineteenth-century internationalism has largely been neglected, relegated to the nodes of informal 'imperial encounters' or of 'meetings of experts on technical or scientific subjects', which often did not distribute equal authority to Indian delegates.<sup>32</sup> Although Legg recognises India's gradually rising international status dating from pre-colonial times to the latter decades of the nineteenth century, he describes the Versailles Peace Conference as the moment of India's entrance 'into international consciousness as a diplomatic unit'.<sup>33</sup>

Departing from the dominant *realpolitik* framework, this chapter argues that beyond the domain of nation-states and within the realm of festivals and religion, India was being represented in selective 'national' spaces by India's quasi-sovereigns, native princes. In investigating India's 'national' spaces at the Exposition and the Parliament, the chapter, then, provides nineteenth-century examples in which 'representational sovereignty', unlike at the League, triumphed over the 'governmental sovereignty' of the British Raj.<sup>34</sup>

Before diving into the Columbian Exposition, we will first investigate the politics of display in the 'Age of International Exhibitions' to excavate the dynamic of space and representational sovereignty.

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<sup>31</sup> Legg, 'An International Anomaly?', McQuade, 'Terrorism, Law, and Sovereignty'.

<sup>32</sup> For imperial encounter, see Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Stolte and Fischer-Tiné, while mentioning the Parliament in their history of Pan-Asianism, render it as merely being a site of 'international contact'. See Stolte and Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India', 74; Legg, 'An International Anomaly?', 99.

<sup>33</sup> Legg, 'An International Anomaly?', 99.

<sup>34</sup> For the differences between these two types of 'sovereignty', see Legg, 'An International Anomaly?', 96-99.

## Politics of Display and Representational Sovereignty

*The second half of the nineteenth century has been an age of International Exhibitions.*  
-J.E. Hodgson<sup>35</sup>

The reigning ideas of empires and the political-economic scenes of the nineteenth century culminated in mega-events in the form of international expositions, also called international exhibitions and world fairs.<sup>36</sup> Evolving from eighteenth-century metropolitan exhibition culture, these grand enterprises internationalised the practice of displaying exotic objects or humans for educational and entertainment purposes.<sup>37</sup> By drawing in commodities and people from around the world, these exhibitions created cosmopolitan spaces, which Carol Breckenridge has described as ‘imagined ecumene’ or ‘a discursive space that was global, while nurturing nation-states that were culturally highly specific’.<sup>38</sup>

Beginning with the Great Exposition of 1851, this imagined ecumene was produced by and generated new practices that rendered visualised representation into universalised language recognised by most participants. Like languages, the interpretation of exhibitions was plural.<sup>39</sup> While the involved ‘nations’ sought to project the image of their envisioned ‘order’ and ‘reality’, to borrow Timothy Mitchell’s paradigm, the received message did not often align with the intended meaning.<sup>40</sup> As Saloni Mathur has highlighted, a Punjabi peasant selected to be on display at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, Tulsī Ram, deviated from his assigned role and continued to seek an audience with the Queen.<sup>41</sup> Filipa Lowndes Vincente

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<sup>35</sup> J.E. Hodgson, ‘Fine Arts – Painting, sculpture, architecture, and decoration’ in Official Catalogue, Great Britain. Royal Commission for the Chicago Exhibition, *Official Catalogue of the British Section*. First edition (London: W. Clowes & Sons, 1893), 261.

<sup>36</sup> ‘World fairs’ usually referred to international expositions held in America.

<sup>37</sup> For more on the history of international expositions and exhibitions, see Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*; Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Carol A. Breckenridge, ‘The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31: 02 (1989), 195–216; Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Robert W. Rydell, ‘World Fairs and Museums’, in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, by Sharon Macdonald (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006); Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*.

<sup>38</sup> Breckenridge, ‘The Aesthetics’, 196.

<sup>39</sup> On symbolism of exhibitions, see Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays Translated from the Italian by William Weaver*. (London: Picador, 1987).

<sup>40</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991), 28-33.

<sup>41</sup> Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 2007), 53-79.

likewise has shown the pride of an Indian orientalist in Italy in belonging to the British Empire despite the conspicuous racial hierarchy charted at the event.<sup>42</sup>

While such flexibility in interpretation destabilised the supposedly hegemonic and disciplinary force of ‘exhibitionary culture’ that Tony Bennett describes, one thing remained unchanged.<sup>43</sup> The exhibition culture contributed to the making of empire and nation, whether directly or symbolically. In making this statement, I am not referring to the relationship between the institution of museum or exhibitions and nation-making that scholars such as Peter Hoffenberg and Tapati Guha-Thakurta have analysed.<sup>44</sup> Rather, I refer to the practice of representation on an international stage, and its implications. It is this shift of focus that allows us to place international expositions within the history of internationalism.

Representation played a key role in international expositions. The hosting nations used the international stage to celebrate their own ‘national’ progress, and to carve out their status in the competitive world. This took on both discursive and material expressions. Queen Victoria opened the Exposition of 1851 with the statement that the event would instigate a benign competition that would ‘contribute to maintain[ing] the peace of the world’.<sup>45</sup> Henry Maine echoed her statement by seeing the Great Exposition as Britain’s declaration of the age of peace, writing that the Exposition ‘seriously added to the belief that wars had ceased; strife in arms was to be superseded by competition in the peaceful arts, [and] controversy was to be conducted by literary agencies and no longer by arms’.<sup>46</sup> Such pronouncements of Pax Britannica permeated throughout the actual layout of the Exposition. As Breckenridge has pointed out, without a national court, Britain spread its objects throughout Crystal Palace to signal its ‘encompass[ing] [of] the world and her global ecumene’.<sup>47</sup>

America, the location of the events examined in this chapter, also used these international fairs explicitly to reaffirm its nationhood, by turning these events into a celebration of its history. The first successful American World Fair held in Philadelphia in

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<sup>42</sup> Filipa Lowndes Vincente, *Other Orientalisms: India between Florence and Bombay, 1860-1900* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012), 44. For other reactions of Indian audience at international expositions, see Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 45-49.

<sup>43</sup> Tony Bennett, ‘The Exhibitionary Complex’, *New Formations*, no. 4 (1988), 73–102.

<sup>44</sup> Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*; Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> Henry Maine, *International Law: A Series of Lectures Delivered before the University of Cambridge, 1887* (London: John Murray 1888), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Breckenridge, ‘The Aesthetics’, 204.

1876, the Centennial Exposition, commemorated the signing of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>48</sup> The second American international exhibition, the World's Columbian Exposition held on May Day 1893, commemorated Columbus' discovery of the New World, and aimed 'to teach ... the world' the progress that the 'young republic' had made, as well as its 'hopes [for] the greater future for its people and for mankind'.<sup>49</sup> Chauncey Depew, the National Commissioner to the Chicago Exposition, insisted that the Exposition was much more than a 'commercial enterprise', due to the 'coincidence of [its] opening and the anniversary of the greatest event since our Saviour was born'.<sup>50</sup> Just as with America's 'discovery', the Columbian Exposition marked a historic and national event 'to vibrate until the work [of the nation] [wa]s done'.<sup>51</sup>

While these examples may seem to bolster Mitchell's idea of 'world-as-exhibition', in which the hosting nations projected a hierarchical envisioning of world order, the utilisation of the international stage with a liberal banner indicated something deeper about the nature of 'national' representation in the supranational domain.<sup>52</sup> Many people quickly exposed the mere ornamental value of these statements. As Alexandre Geppert has shown, the German writer Max Eyth commented, '[the international expositions'] contribution to world peace, even the most simple-minded among us know what nonsensical chatter this is. ... What we are doing here, will be completely forgotten in five years'.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the fact that these events continued to anchor themselves in these idealistic messages, despite their obvious fallacy, indicated the necessity of creating an international 'realm' that was somewhat reflective of reality, but was also inherently malleable.

Indeed, through absence and presence, international expositions revealed and generated changes in world politics. Queen Victoria refused to 'to allow the Government to take an official part in' the Paris Exposition of 1889 as it celebrated the centenary of the French

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<sup>48</sup> The first ever exposition was the New York Exposition, which ended disastrously. Though the Philadelphia Exposition also ended with much debt, it was more successful than the former.

<sup>49</sup> Cited in Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at the American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 7.

<sup>50</sup> *New York and the World's Fair: The Dinner Given in the Interest of the World's Columbian Exposition by the New York Members of the National Commission, at Delmonico's December 21, 1891.* (World's Columbian Exposition: Department of Publicity and Promotion, 1892), 17. Royal Society of Arts Archive, PR.MC/112/13/5.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 10-15.

<sup>53</sup> Cited in Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 209 fn 20. Scholars have also emphasised the ephemeral element of these grand affairs. See Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*; Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*.

Revolution.<sup>54</sup> For the World's Columbian Exposition, China boycotted the event in retaliation against America's Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.<sup>55</sup> Austria decided to exclude Hungarian exhibits in its exhibition space, pushing Hungarians to ask the American Consul at Budapest to reserve a separate space for their objects.<sup>56</sup> At the New York World's Fair of 1939-40, Germany and Spain did not participate in this 'Dawn of a New Day', while Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR closed their pavilions in 1940.<sup>57</sup>

Visibility and invisibility carried equal, if not more, significance for nations without states. For them, building pavilions in international expositions became 'proof' of symbolic sovereignty. As Henry Em has shown, King Kojong and, the noted intellectual, Yoon Chi Ho both saw 'the very act of [Korea's] self-representation at the World's Fair' as a mark of 'Korea's distinctiveness from China and Japan', and 'its independence and sovereignty'.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, international expositions presented a realm in which Indian princes could display their authority, their knowledge, and their culture on a wider platform.<sup>59</sup> As the Chair of the India Section at the Royal Society of Arts, Samuel Digby, wrote at the end of the nineteenth century, without the 'public-spirited and loyal munificence of the native princes', the execution of exhibitions would not have been 'possible'.<sup>60</sup>

This is not to say that such gestures of representational sovereignty received the acknowledgement and respect that the word 'sovereignty' demands. To the wider audience, these members of monarchies remained mere objects of curiosity. The infanta, Maria Eulalia, who attended the Exposition with Prince Antonio, drew a large following despite her attempt to remain incognito.<sup>61</sup> 'The celebrated Maharajah of Kapurthala,' appeared in the American historian Hubert Bancroft's account as having 'almost exactly the facial appearance of our [Hindoo] juggler', whose expression exuded a sense of 'reserved pride'.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Freda Muriel Fisher, Née Wood; Daughter of Sir Henry Trueman Wood; Niece of Annie Besant: Autobiographical Memoir by Freda Muriel F: Circa 1935-1939: Typewritten., 1935-1939, 149. Western Manuscripts, British Library, Add MS 74759:c 1935-1939.

<sup>55</sup> Henry Em, *Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2013), fn31, 59.

<sup>56</sup> 'For the great parade', *The New York Times*, 28 August 1892, 9.

<sup>57</sup> This was the opening slogan of the exhibition.

<sup>58</sup> Em, *Great Enterprise*, 54.

<sup>59</sup> A good example is Mysore princely state. See Nair, *Mysore Modern*, 127-163.

<sup>60</sup> Royal Commission for the Chicago Exhibition, 1893, *Official Catalogue of the British Section* (London: William Cowes & Sons, 1893), 167.

<sup>61</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair* (Chicago, San Francisco: The Bancroft company, 1893), 971.

<sup>62</sup> Id., 219.

However precarious the impact these gestures of authority created, the implications of hosting, participating, or rejecting international expositions indicate the significance of space in ‘national’ representation on the international stage. As the following investigation of the Columbian Exposition will show, the sites of the White City not only brought ‘nations’ to life, they also triggered heated competition, reflecting international tensions and rivalries between the parties involved.

### **National Houses, National Days**

Space within the exposition sites began to hold very different values. Words such as ‘central’, ‘convenient’, ‘dignified’, and ‘worthy’ became defining markers of desirable sites, in addition to the more common adjectives that described volume, such as ‘adequate’ and ‘big’.<sup>63</sup> As the Exposition’s different sites accumulated additional qualities, controlling these spaces began to mirror some of the mechanics of territorialisation and its governance.<sup>64</sup>

At the Columbian Exposition, the exposition site offered security and safety with police, Columbian guards, a hospital, and a fire department. Troops of ‘Columbian guards’ composed of former army and police officers, as well as ‘men from every state in the Union and from a score of foreign nations, college graduates and linguists who [could] converse in a dozen different tongues’ were stationed across the venue.<sup>65</sup> Mainly in charge of safety and security, this ‘more efficient body of men’ was to ‘restore order merely by force of numbers, no weapon being carried except a small sword, and that more for ornament than use’.<sup>66</sup>

Such territorialisation of the Exposition ground, albeit at times more performative than substantive, rendered each national building into replicas of real or imagined nation-states. Built with distinct architectural styles that purportedly characterised each nation, the national houses served as an extension of main exhibits, as well as an embassy for the visitors of its nationality, and the official address of correspondence for foreign commissioners. Great Britain dedicated its national building to its sovereign, calling it the Victoria House. Das Deutsche Haus, designed by the government architect Johannes Radke, displayed the German Empire’s

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<sup>63</sup> Pamphlet, 5. Chicago Exhibition Official Publications Issued by Exhibition Commission in Chicago, 1892-1893. RSA Archive. PR.MC/112/13/5.

<sup>64</sup> For the most recent work on territoriality, see Charles S. Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging Since 1500* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>65</sup> Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, 79; also see ‘Liquors at the Fair’, *The New York Times*, 2 January 1892, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.



26 states' coat of arms.<sup>67</sup> From display to function, then, these buildings were freighted with symbolic sovereignty.

Strict border rules applied. Even advertisements of manufacturers, whether in the form of business cards or circulars, could not be disseminated beyond the demarcated space.<sup>68</sup> As such, within the borders of each national building, foreign commissioners emerged as its quasi-sovereigns, holding sole responsibility over negotiation of the size of the territory and the execution of its exhibit. While the layout of each exhibit in its 'decorations, signs, dimensions of cabinets, shelving, counters' and 'the arrangement of exhibits' conformed to 'the general plan adopted by the Director-General', the official commissioners nominated by the respective government and approved by the Director-General selected the exhibits, distributed and negotiated space to each exhibitor, and determined the arrangement of objects.<sup>69</sup>

As constructing and supervising these national houses began to resemble nation- and empire-building, they also started to reflect international tensions. Territorialising the White City involved strategies resembling warfare and the competition revolved around, and through, space.

### *National Houses*

The politics of national houses largely unfolded spatially. Broadly, three different engagements with space shaped the contest. First was location: from the early stages of the Exposition, the countries with the most vested interest in the event vied for prime location. Great Britain, Germany, France, Denmark, and Japan were main contenders.<sup>70</sup> Of these, Great Britain, Germany, and France built their houses along the river. The Victoria House stood on its own,

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<sup>67</sup> Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, 886.

<sup>68</sup> Rules and Regulations pamphlet, 12. Chicago Exhibition Official Publications Issued by Exhibition Commission in Chicago, 1892-1893. RSA Archive, PR.MC/112/13/5.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> 'World's Columbian Exposition, Classification and Rules department of manufactures', 4. Chicago Exhibition Official Publications Issued by exhibition commission in Chicago, 1892-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/13/5.

detached from other national houses (See picture 1), which Dredge saw as ‘the best site of all’.<sup>71</sup>

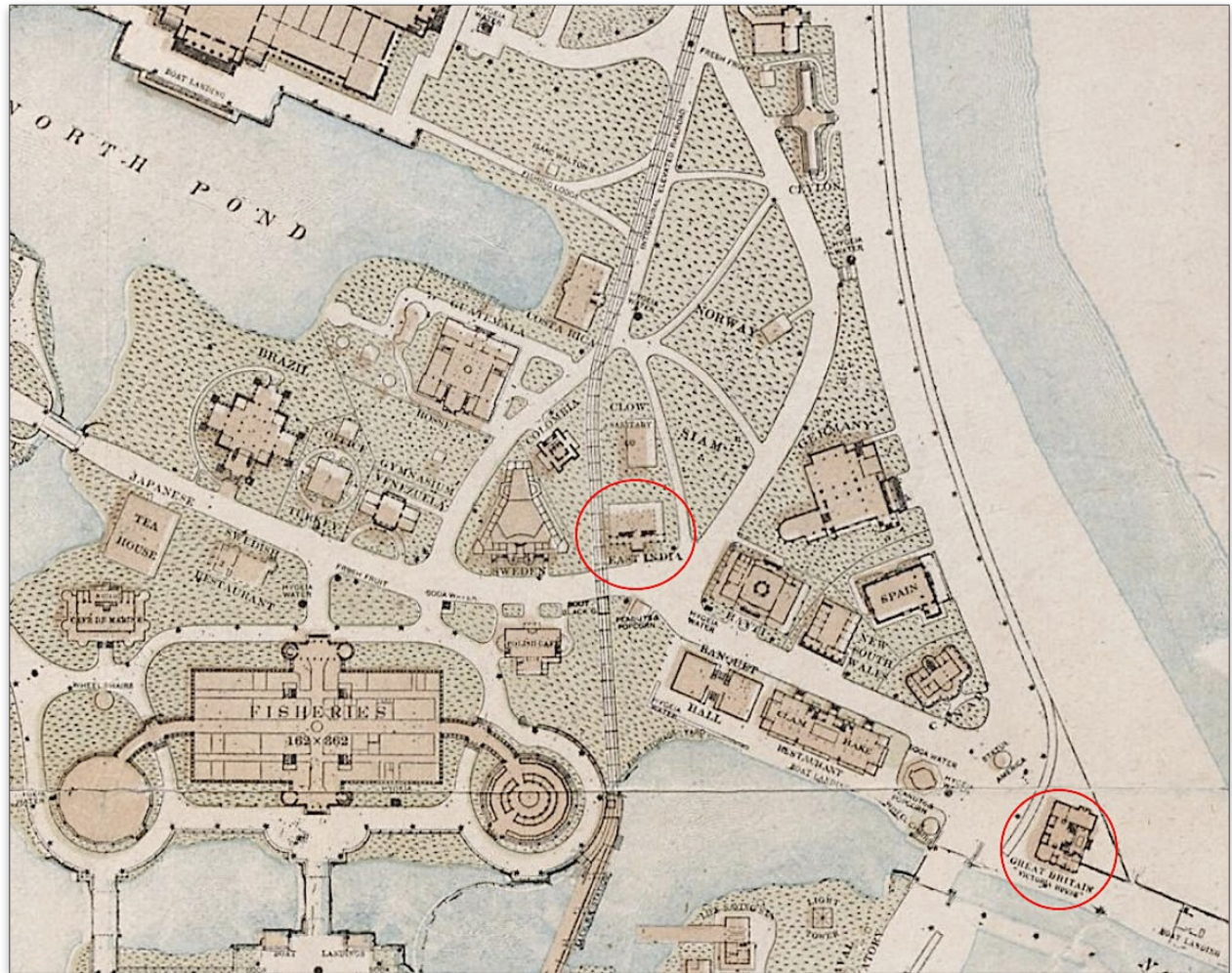


Image 6. East India Building and Great Britain Building (encircled).<sup>72</sup>

Second was volume: the total size allotted to each nation triggered fierce battles. In the culture of nineteenth-century international expositions, scale indicated the prominence of the hosting nation. Each new international exposition boasted grander size, often inducing direct comparison to previous events. Depew’s introduction of the Columbian Exposition to New York members of the Exposition Executives illustrates the importance of scale in measuring the status of an international event:

The grounds devoted to the Fair are more than three times greater in area than

<sup>71</sup> James Dredge, *A Record of the Transportation Exhibits at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893* (London: New York; Offices of “Engineering.” John Wiley & Sons, 1894), 27.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Souvenir Map of the World’s Columbian Exposition 1893’. *Encyclopaedia of Chicago*. <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/10610.html> (accessed 27 November 2016).

the acres which the exhibition had at Paris in 1889. The buildings are more numerous and much larger than the ones which astonished the visitors at the French capital. The floor space in these magnificent structures will be five times greater than at the Centennial exhibit at Philadelphia and double that of the French exhibition at Paris.<sup>73</sup>

Similar relationships between space, status, and size were at play among national houses. Japan enjoyed the largest space, a 40,000sq. ft. building and a garden complex on Wooded Island, several buildings and attractions on the Midway, and some 90,000 sq. ft. of display space in the White City. This was possible because the Japanese ‘imperial commission’ strictly controlled the subject of size, and its leader, the Foreign Minister, Mutsu Munemitsu, spent ‘virtually every waking hour pondering the problems of how to renegotiate (unequal) treaties with Western imperial powers’.<sup>74</sup>

If in the case of Japan, the demonstration of size was an assertion of its equality in the world of nations, for European countries the same subject resembled a war of empires. An incident reported by the *New York Times* in July 1891 elucidates the tension that the issue caused between Germany, France, and Great Britain. Starting with the ‘prejudices of the French and their easily-aroused hostility’, the article stated:

Yesterday morning in the *Galignani Messenger* appeared a telegram from the United States stating that in the exposition plans double the space accorded to France had just been allotted to Germany. As a matter of fact, no space has yet been allotted to either country, but the telegram, of course, was calculated to rouse the French animosity to the exposition and all concerned with it, and, even as matters stand, it may be very difficult for the Commissioners to erase the impression produced.<sup>75</sup>

As this excerpt suggests, the battle over space involved military tactics of surveillance, conjecture, ambush, and dependence on information published in newspapers or spread through rumours. The rivalry between Germany and Great Britain played out more overtly than that between Germany and France. The competition between the former two lasted until a year before the Exposition’s opening.<sup>76</sup> A report from the *New York Times* relayed this specific conflict, as it unfolded between the Secretary to the British Royal Commission, Henry Wood,

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<sup>73</sup> *New York and the World’s Fair: The Dinner Given in the Interest of the World’s Columbian Exposition by the New York Members of the National Commission, at Delmonico’s December, 21, 1891.* (World’s Columbian Exposition: Department of Publicity and Promotion, 1892), 9-10. RSA, PR.MC/112/13/5.

<sup>74</sup> Cited in Em, *Great Enterprise*, 60, Fn 46.

<sup>75</sup> ‘The World’s Fair abroad’, *The New York Times*, 26 Jul 1891, 1.

<sup>76</sup> ‘They Ask for Ten Acres’, *The New York Times*, 26 September 1891, 2.

and the German national representative, Herr Alquist. It noted that immediately after Wood's mild complaint about the lack of space given to Britain, Alquist declared his 'mission to Chicago to get more space'.<sup>77</sup> Further plunging into belligerent tone, he continued:

I am prepared to launch the wrath of the German Emperor at the heads of the Chicago gentlemen if they refuse to give me the space. I do not think the American people are aware of the intense interest which Emperor William takes in the United States, and it is largely through his efforts that the German Empire will make a better showing at this American exposition than it ever did at any previous affair of the kind. Of course, we people of Germany could not have been expected to feel very enthusiastic over the Paris Exposition... and all of the effort we might have put into an exposition at that time, had it been held in some other country, will be utilized in gathering together a great German exhibit at the Columbia Exposition.<sup>78</sup>

Alquist argued that Germany deserved more space than any other nation, because the emperor — not the commissioners, nor the people, but the emperor — took a special interest in the event. At the expense of not attending the Paris Exposition, upon which the Chicago Exposition modelled itself, Germany had channelled all its sources to occupy the best space in Chicago. Thus, America, according to Alquist, had to reciprocate with the same level of respect by offering a large size commensurate with the important status of Germany. Otherwise, Alquist claimed his right 'to launch the wrath of the German Emperor' on his behalf. Thus, the size of the national building had to reflect the state of international relations.

In addition to the scale of the national buildings, the rivalry between Germany and Great Britain was evident in the allocated compartments of exhibition buildings themselves. Both often occupied spaces of equal size in close proximity (See Image 2). In cases where Great Britain could not hold a comparable size of exhibit on its own, it retained competitive spirit, by placing one of its colonies or dominions adjacent to the British exhibit (See Image 3). Although spatially they were on par, Germany superseded Britain in its displays. This was noticed, indeed, it prompted much recrimination within the British Commission about the mismanagement of the British Section, as well as in the House of Commons regarding the expansion of German commercial ties in the United States.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> 'More room at the Fair', *The New York Times*, 23 June 1892, 9.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> 'Germany at the Chicago Exhibition', HC Deb 7 December 1893, vol. 19, cc 635-6. The first point will be further discussed in Chapter 4.



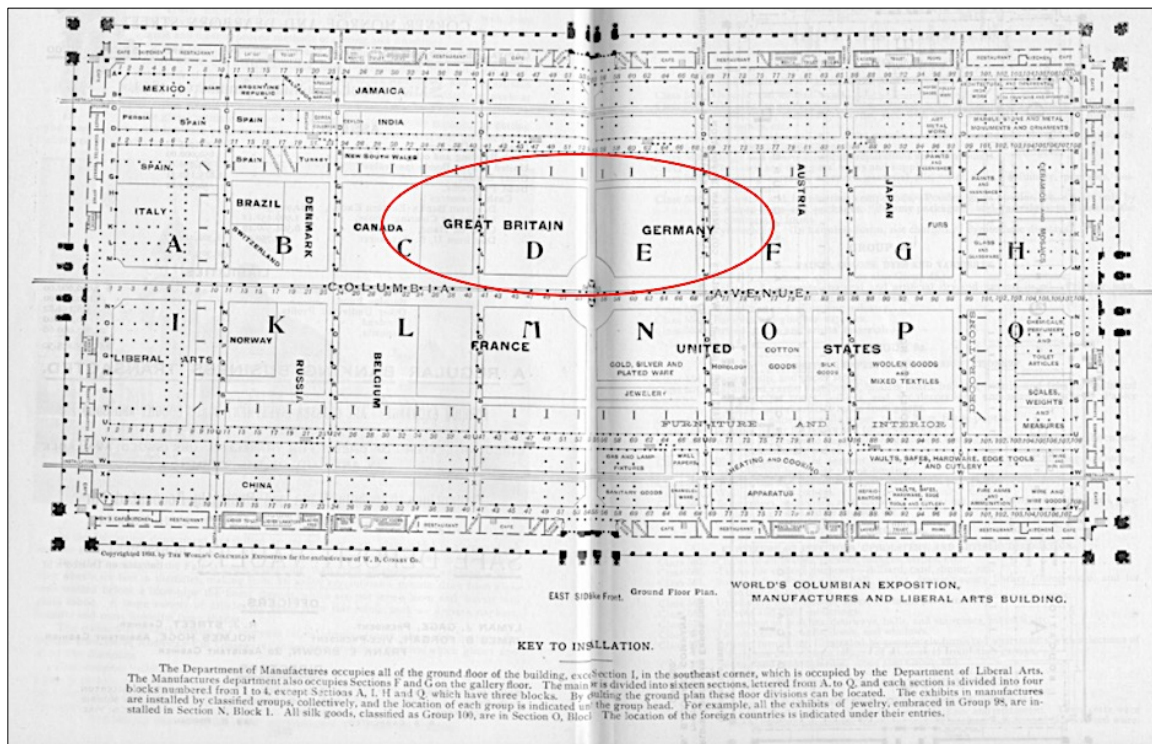


Image 7. Great Britain and Germany (encircled). Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building Key to Installation.<sup>80</sup>

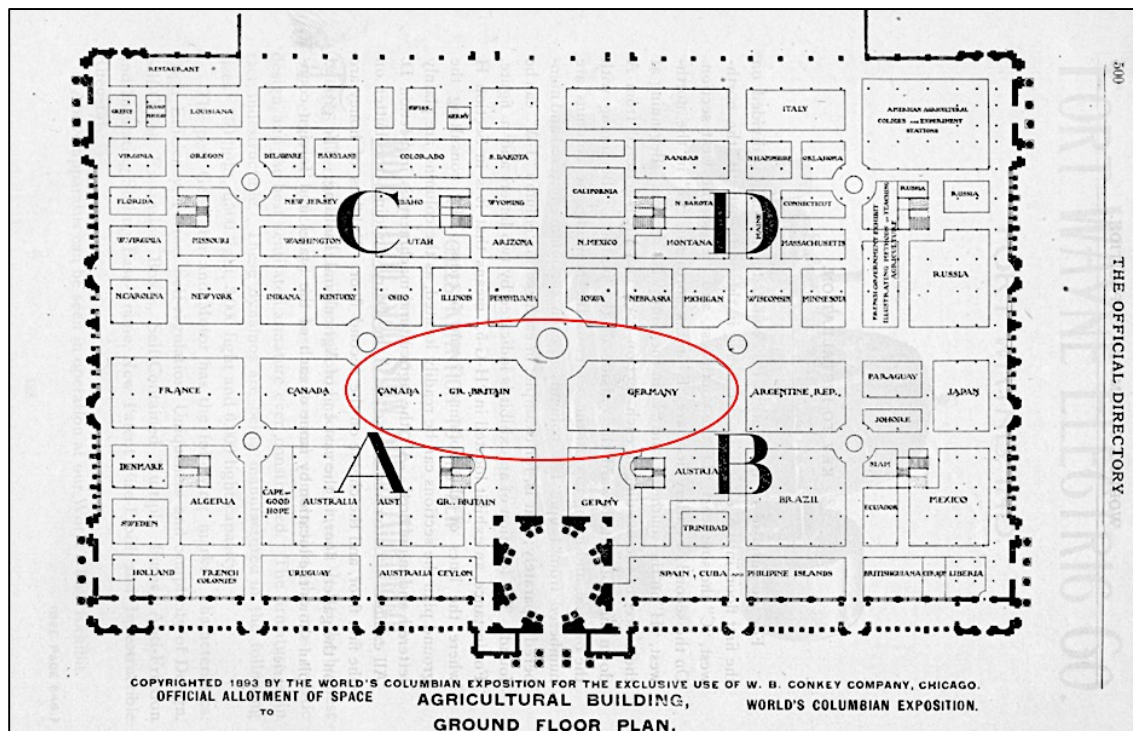


Image 8. Great Britain and Germany (encircled). Agriculture Building Ground Floor Plan.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building Key to Installation. Chicago Exhibition Official Publications Issued by Exhibition Commission in Chicago, 1892-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/13/5.

<sup>81</sup> Agriculture Building Ground Floor Plan. Chicago Exhibition Official Publications Issued by Exhibition Commission in Chicago, 1892-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/13/5.

Third, space was distance: The proximity of each national house signified much about the state of international relations. Expressing his desire to strengthen the Anglo-American relationship, for instance, Dredge stated in an interview, ‘as is proper, England and America will have their buildings in close proximity’.<sup>82</sup> As Hoffenberg has also argued, the exhibits of British colonies often remained near Great Britain’s exhibits at international exhibitions to project ‘imperial unity and power’.<sup>83</sup> Wood strove to continue this custom, by securing sites for colonies in the near vicinity of the Victoria House in Jackson Park and in each exhibition to reflect the political unit of the British Empire. ‘The colonies’, he argued, ‘are quite as keen to be near us as we are to have them’.<sup>84</sup> However, as the next section will show, the Bombay committee for India’s building at the White City saw the matter differently, enthusing over the Pavilion’s detachment from the Victoria House.

Through location, size, and distance, the national houses acted as representation of national spaces as well as international relations. The space procured by each country’s commissioners symbolised the international status of their country. As such, every national commission negotiated these spaces as if they were negotiating real national territories. They constantly eyed the progress of their ‘rivalling’ countries and conveyed the interests of their sovereigns by laying further claims in the White City. The more space they occupied in the venue, the greater their international prominence was deemed to be. Thus, in these spaces of representation, the national houses also became sites of politics. Here, location, volume, and distance all contributed to the making of the nation’s status, not merely of its brand.

### *National Days*

The national buildings also allowed for temporal symbolism, in that they often offered sites for national celebrations. If desired, nations could designate a day on which to honour their history. These ‘national days’ occurred on a memorable date, with military parade, singing of the national anthem, and speeches of national leaders. Germany Day, held on 15 June 1893, thus commemorated the ‘fifth anniversary of the accession of Wilhelm II’.<sup>85</sup> France Day, on 14 July,

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<sup>82</sup> ‘England and the Fair’, *The Washington Post*, 3 October 1891, 1. For special attention paid to the official visitors from England and Germany, see ‘Liquors at the Fair’, *The New York Times*, 2 January 1892, 5.

<sup>83</sup> Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Henry Wood to Henry Wheatley, 28 June 1892, Chicago Exhibition 1893: General Administrative Correspondence 1892-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/10/10.

<sup>85</sup> Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, 890.

commemorated the 104<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. Canada showcased a ‘military and civic parade’.<sup>86</sup> British Empire Day involved West Point cadets, ‘the far-famed Black Watch’, ‘the trooping of the colours’, followed by a Columbia chorus singing ‘God Save the Queen’.<sup>87</sup> Even those without a national building celebrated their ‘national day’ at other locations. For a week starting 30 September 1893, Scotland used the New York State Building as well as the Festival Hall, and Ireland imbued the crowd in shades of green from the Midway Plaisance to the White City.

National days, while disguised as festivals, rapidly turned into political events. Each national day witnessed speeches of renowned politicians and drew in dense populations of immigrants residing in the country. The German Day, which attracted ‘more than 200,000 persons ... of whom at least 50,000 were Germans’, had Baron von Hollenben speaking on behalf of his government, as well as the German revolutionary-turned-American-senator Carl Shurtz, who ‘touched on the loyalty of those who, while legal to the country of their adoption, still held in honour the Fatherland’.<sup>88</sup> The Canada Day attracted ‘former subjects of the queen’ as well as ‘many thousands of Americans’, whom the Canadian Commissioner Cockburn described as an emblem of America’s ‘true friends[hip] to Canada’.<sup>89</sup> The British Empire Day, convened by British residents in Chicago, included a toast to President Cleveland and a speech delivered by Chicago’s mayor, Carter Harrison.

While these may seem like cordial gestures of foreign countries acting as invited guests to a party or of immigrants negotiating their belonging, for some, like Ireland, hosting a national day carried a deeper message. Irish Day quickly turned into a platform for Home Rule. Like other countries’ national days, Irish Day involved national ballads as well as speeches of prominent men, notably James Shanks, the lord-mayor of Dublin. Other distinguished orators spoke in sharp political tones. Edward Blake, a representative of the Irish Party, spoke of Home Rule and closed his speech with Gladstone’s description of the occasion that read, ‘there could not be a more interesting, nor except on the day of the final victory, a more encouraging occasion’.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Id., 895.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Id., 891; 890.

<sup>89</sup> Id., 901.

<sup>90</sup> Id., 894.

In addition to these speeches that reflected the national politics of Ireland, others fuelled what Benedict Anderson termed, ‘long-distance nationalism’.<sup>91</sup> The opening speech of the event’s chairman, Archbishop Feehan, illustrates Irish Day’s political implications for immigrants:

The Irish-American people assemble for another motive, and that is to revive for today, and I hope for the future, the traditions as well as the aspirations of one of the oldest races of the world. You represent a most ancient people; for your forefathers came from Phoenicia 3,000 years ago, and founded a nation at the time when Moses was leading the Israelites from Egypt, and when Cadmus was giving letters to the world. Even at that early period the Irish were a people with a written law and of advanced civilization. And today, toward the close of the nineteenth century, the Irish-American people recall those grand progenitors and keep alive their traditions.<sup>92</sup>

If the previous speeches focused on the independence of Ireland, this address catered to the self-image of the Irish-American people. With patriotism rooted in its long civilisational history, this speech distinguished Irish-Americans as ‘a people’ amongst others residing in the New World. It also separated immigrants from those at home, by delegating the task of ‘reviv[ing] the traditions’ specifically to Irish-Americans. Given the important contribution of Irish-Americans in the Irish independence movement, the overall tenor of Irish Day clearly illustrates that the event combined the past and the future of a nation, and served as a site to address its present condition.<sup>93</sup>

The ‘national’ buildings and ‘national’ days harboured conspicuous, if cross-cutting, political implications. Not only did location, size, and distance carry significance for the nations represented, they also set off international tensions amongst the ‘exhibition-wallahs’.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, they became sites at which nation’s history and future were celebrated. In this context, the fact that the India Pavilion occupied a place in the White City becomes important. It functioned as more than an ‘East India Pavilion’, serving tea and displaying objects of luxury. Significantly, it was India’s alternative ‘sovereigns’ who territorialised the building by circumventing the Raj itself.

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<sup>91</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Long Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics* (Amsterdam: Centre for Asian Studies, 1992).

<sup>92</sup> Bancroft, *The Book*, 895.

<sup>93</sup> See Bruce Nelson, *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); Angela F. Murphy, *American Slavery, Irish Freedom: Abolition, Immigrant Citizenship, and the Transatlantic Movement for Irish Repeal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Michael Doorley, *Irish-American Diaspora Nationalism: The Friends of Irish Freedom, 1916-1935* (Dublin: Four Courts, c2005);

<sup>94</sup> ‘Exhibition-wallah’ is a neologism used by Hoffenberg in Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 31.



## The (East) India Pavilion



Image 9. East India Pavilion, designed by Henry Ives Cobb.<sup>95</sup>

In July 1891, Henry Holland, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote to the Governor of Ceylon, informing him of the creation of the British Royal Commission to oversee ‘the interests of Great Britain and her colonies at the Columbian Exposition’.<sup>96</sup> Immediately afterwards, J.J. Grinlinton, the managing director of the Planters’ Tea Company, stepped forward as the Special Commissioner of the Ceylon Exhibit. He secured approximately 28,000 sq.ft. for Ceylon at various sites of the Exposition. In addition to the Ceylon Pavilion (24,000 sq.ft.) at the White City next to the French Building, numerous Ceylon tea kiosks also occupied the Agricultural Building (1,684 sq.ft.), Manufactures Building (1,350 sq.ft.), and the Women’s Building (540 sq.ft.), which required the assistance of the Lady Board Managers.<sup>97</sup>

Approximately a year after Holland’s invitation letter, in November 1892, Grinlinton reported to the British Royal Commission Secretary, Henry Trueman Wood, ‘his Excellency the Governor, Sir Aurthur Havelock, has done everything in his power to further the project,

<sup>95</sup> Bancroft, *The Book*, 229, 230.

<sup>96</sup> Dredge, *A Record*, xlvi.

<sup>97</sup> *Id.*, xlvi.

and the various races of the Island are in sympathy with the Governor in the desire to see Ceylon well represented.’<sup>98</sup>

Ceylon’s conspicuous presence in the Columbian Exposition, supported by the Government and the ‘various races of the Island’, starkly contrasted with the jewel in the crown, India. Despite the official invitation from the American Government, as well as the advice of the Royal Commission, the Government of India refused to support an Indian exhibit until as late as June 1892.<sup>99</sup> Reflecting the Government’s hesitation, reports on India’s participation at the Exposition regretted the ‘meagre’ presence of India, and casually ignored her national court, officially titled the ‘East India Pavilion’. On the opening day of the Exposition the *New York Times* observed that:

India has but a trifling space, the Indian Government not having taken any action till a very late date; but arrangements have been made for the exhibition and sale of Indian tea and for a collection of choice Indian art ware. A small collection of Indian woods will also be placed in the Forestry Department. Ceylon has a much larger space, and it will be much better filled. Her courts will be reproductions of old Cingalese work, and all the productions of the island will be fully illustrated.<sup>100</sup>

The writer pointed to the Ceylon Court, which was only one of many other locations that Ceylon occupied, to prove Ceylon’s superior display. On the other hand, he evaluated the Indian presence poorly, basing his judgment solely on the Government’s delayed support. Despite the striking exterior, the Indian court was reduced to having ‘trifling space’. Interestingly, the records produced by the British Commission painted the same picture.

Structurally, *The Official Catalogue of the British Section* published by the Commission emphasised India’s presence. It designated a separate chapter on the ‘India Exhibit’, while other exhibits of the British Section were divided into different categories of display — agriculture, manufacture, transportation, and so on. Yet, even in this catalogue, Samuel Digby, the Chairman of the India Section, dwelled largely on the profits made by Indian exhibits of previous expositions, and commented on India’s participation at Chicago only in the last sentence of the chapter. This, too, came at the end of his analysis of American exports to India. He wrote:

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<sup>98</sup> Special Commissioner for Ceylon, I. Symlinton to Wood, 3 November 1892, Chicago Exhibition 1893: General administrative correspondence 1892-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/10/10.

<sup>99</sup> ‘The World’s Fair at Chicago’, *The Times of India*, 10 February 1892, 3; ‘India and the Chicago Exhibition’, *The Times of India*, 23 July 1892, 5.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Secretary Sir Henry Wood here’, *The New York Times*, 4 Mar 1893, 9.

The most, in fact the only really, important article shipped to India from America at present is kerosene (the cargoes received in 1891-92 amounted to Rs. 1,084,148) and the demand for this is steadily declining, owing to Russian rivalry ... The future may perhaps show that America has something else to give in return for the increased consumption of Indian tea that, it is hoped, will result from the World's Columbian Exposition.<sup>101</sup>

Digby made clear of the wide-ranging impact of expositions on commercial transactions. Exports to India reflected international commercial powers as indicated by his comment on the rise of Russia. Consequently, India's contribution to the World's Columbian Exposition came as an opportunity to shift the commercial dynamic between India and America. Despite the commercial significance of the event for India, the Pavilion remained all but invisible. After Digby's brief history of India's performance in international expositions of the century, the editors of the catalogue further dismantled the Pavilion by leaving traces of India scattered throughout the descriptions of other displays, from Manufactures to Forest, Agriculture, and Transportation Buildings, but never as a single presentation under the Indian Pavilion.<sup>102</sup>

Similarly, in the official record on the Transportation Building dedicated to the American president, James Dredge discussed the India Pavilion as if it were disconnected from other representations of India. He stated,

India was, unfortunately, but very poorly represented, though the handful of exhibitors in the Manufactures building exhibited Indian textile, metal work, etc., of great value. The Commissioner, Mr. Blechynden, however, erected a very beautiful Oriental pavilion in the grounds, chiefly for the benefit of the Indian Tea Association, and in this building eight different districts and about 100 different companies were represented. It appears probably that one result of the Columbian Exposition in the United States will be a large transfer of the tea trade from China to India and Ceylon.<sup>103</sup>

Two points must be noted in this excerpt. First, Dredge's claim that the 'Oriental pavilion' was established by 'the commissioner, Mr. Blechynden', was far from truth. As Wood's letter in October 1892 noted, Blechynden, one of many exhibitors, struggled against a native-prince-sponsored trader, S. J. Tellery, to gain more space within the Indian Pavilion.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Royal Commission, *Official Catalogue*, 470.

<sup>102</sup> *Id.*, 471-475.

<sup>103</sup> Dredge, *A Record*, xlix

<sup>104</sup> Lloyd to Wood, 6 October 1892, Chicago Exhibition 1893: General administrative correspondence 1892-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/10/10.

Second, rendering the Pavilion as a mere affiliate to the Indian Tea District Association and other commercial companies, Dredge saw the ‘great value’ of Indian commodities as distinct from India’s ‘national’ representation. The Indian Tea District Association played a crucial role in financing many Indian Exhibits. At the Paris Exhibition of 1889, when neither the Queen Empress nor the Government of India sent any support, the Association, under the auspices of the London Mayor Polydore de Keyser and the Mansion House Committee, which included the same leading members of the British Royal Commission for Chicago, purchased most of the space for the India building. However, at the Columbian Exposition, it played a relatively marginal role.<sup>105</sup> Situated near the main entrance, ‘native attendants in picturesque attire’ served tea ‘as made in India’, as an accompaniment to the displays of other objects. Rather than tea being the main selling point of the Pavilion, a variety of goods and entertainment, particularly those arranged by S. J. Tellery, attracted visitors. As the historian Hubert Bancroft meticulously recorded, ‘a Hindoo juggler’, sculptures of idols, carvings of sandalwood, silks, Kashmir shawls, rugs, ‘relics and curios’ such as ‘swords, battle-axes, ... and shields, representing the weapons of the Hindoos and Mohammedans, the Burmese and the warlike Mahrattas’, and ‘living curiosities’ all caught the eyes of many visitors.<sup>106</sup>

Dredge’s promotion of Blechynden over Tellery, and the separation of ‘national representation’ from objects of ‘great value’ reveal the Commission’s absolute refusal to acknowledge the Pavilion. On the contrary, in the reports produced by the American Exposition Committees, the words ‘Hindustan’ and ‘India Building’ both directed the reader to the East India Pavilion.<sup>107</sup> Was it the Pavilion’s commercial objects that rendered it irrelevant to the national image of India? Wood certainly believed so, as he wrote to Birdwood in 1891, ‘any Indian firms desiring to exhibit and willing to pay for space can have space’, but they would not be creating a ‘representation of India’.<sup>108</sup> This belief premised on the separation of objects for consumption and for national representation was illogical, if politically astute, as every objects in other exhibition buildings and the parts of buildings themselves — including the Victoria House — were put up for sale at the end of the Exposition. Furthermore, the organisers of the Exposition had intended the White City, where the Pavilion stood, to be a space for ‘civilised’ culture rather than a place of overt consumerism, effectively or otherwise.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Royal Commission, *Official Catalogue*, 468.

<sup>106</sup> Bancroft, *The Book*, 901.

<sup>107</sup> Id., 901-902.

<sup>108</sup> Wood to Birdwood, 9 Dec 1891, Henry Trueman Wood Papers, Indian Office Records and Private Records, BL, Mss Eur F216/29.

<sup>109</sup> Gilbert, *Perfect Cities*, 15, 78-95.

The Commission's conscious forgetting of the Indian Pavilion, despite the latter's conspicuous visibility, signals its discomfort with the representation of India. In fact, the East India Pavilion occupied the White City without much support from the Government of India and with minimal control by the British Commission. Instead, India was represented by the patronage of Indian princes, with some help from the American Government.

Initially, the British Royal Commission had recognised the need for good Indian representation at the Columbian Exposition. The Commission's official catalogue stated that the Council of the Society of Arts notified the India Office and Colonial Office of the event even prior to the establishment of the Royal Commission to provide ample time for 'the preparation of their exhibits'.<sup>110</sup> The correspondence between Wood and the London members of the Commission reveal that the British Commission put in much effort to fulfil the American Executive's demand of a 'good India contribution, above all things, a characteristic India Building'.<sup>111</sup> Wood, wary of 'simply giving offences to the Yankees when an opportunity occurred for making ourselves pleasurable to them', urged Birdwood to 'use [his] utmost ... to induce the India Office to afford us the means for carrying out these suggestions'.<sup>112</sup> He put forward the Bombay journalist, Samuel Digby, to supervise the Indian and colonial exhibits.

Wood's assignment of Samuel Digby as the overseer of the India Section was an interesting choice. To begin with, Digby, a member of the Royal Society of Arts who served as its Secretary of Indian Section (1890) and Colonial Section (1898), was 'an outspoken critic of the British Government's India policy'.<sup>113</sup> Unlike the previous generation of exhibition-wallahs like George Birdwood, who revealed his racial prejudice after dedicating his life to spreading knowledge on Indian art, Digby maintained his sympathy for the general nationalist sentiments brewing in the subcontinent. He actively wrote for the *Bombay Gazette*, which published letters critical of the Raj, and the *Indian Daily News*, and was on the council of the National Indian Association in Aid of Social Progress and Education in India, which 'assist[ed] in movement which led to appointment of a Select committee of House of Commons to consider the grievances of the Unconvenated Services of India (1890)'.<sup>114</sup> His brother, William

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<sup>110</sup> Royal Commission, *Official Catalogue*, vii.

<sup>111</sup> Wood to Birdwood, 20 September 1891, Henry Trueman Wood Papers, Indian Office Records and Private Records, BL, Mss Eur F216/29.

<sup>112</sup> Wood to Birdwood, 17 April 1891; Wood to Birdwood, 20 September 1891, Henry Trueman Wood Papers. India Office Records and Private Records, BL, Mss Eur F216/29.

<sup>113</sup> Hudson eds., *The Royal Society of Arts*, 467; Kartar Lalvani, *The Making of India: Untold Story of British Enterprise* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016), 34.

<sup>114</sup> 'DIGBY, Samuel', *Who Was Who* (A & C Black, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 1920–2016); online edn, Oxford University Press, 2014; online edn, April 2014. <http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U195613> (accessed 8 October 2016).

Digby, a vocal critic of the Government of India, served alongside Samuel as a member of the Indian Committee for the Columbian Exposition. In addition to his brother, Samuel Digby also invited ‘George Yule to join the Indian Committee (Chicago)’.<sup>115</sup> He defended his choice by stating that Yule, ‘a wealthy East India merchant, director of the Charterly Mercantile Board of India and a former President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce’, carried ‘weight in India, especially by many natives’.<sup>116</sup> While Digby’s description was accurate, Yule was much more than a figure admired by ‘many natives’; the Scottish merchant made himself known in India as the fourth President of the Indian National Congress.<sup>117</sup>

Wood’s prompt response to the organisers’ demand and Digby’s listing of fellow sympathisers of the Indian progressives to the Indian Committee indicate that the British Royal Commission strove to create an Indian *national* building. In contrast, the Government of India, as late as June 1892, remained ‘disinclined to participate’ or to ensure India’s ‘fair representation’.<sup>118</sup>

While the colonial state neglected the official invitation to represent the jewel in the crown, the Government of the United States persistently showed eagerness to ensure Indian representation. From September 1891, the American Government selected a committee to generate interest from Indian public figures. Recommended by ‘the former American Minister at Athens, Mr. Fearn’, Henry Ballantine, selected as the official ‘organiser of the Exhibition’, journeyed to India to personally recruit exhibitors.<sup>119</sup>

Ballantine, born in Ahmednagar, was no stranger to the subcontinent. Upon graduating from Amherst College, he went into trade in Bombay and New York. He then worked as a ‘consul in Bombay from 1891 to 1896’, while simultaneously ‘maintain[ing] offices [of his private business] in Bombay, Calcutta, and other cities in India’.<sup>120</sup> Ballantine executed the mission assigned to him by his government with much success and with much annoyance to

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<sup>115</sup> Digby to Wood, 4 Feb 92, Chicago Exhibition 1893: General administrative correspondence 1891-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/10/11.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> For more detail on Yule see Joanna de Groot, ‘Metropolitan Desires and Colonial Connections: Reflections on Consumption and Empire’, in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya Bose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>118</sup> Wood, Henry Wood, ‘Chicago and Its Exhibition’, *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 182 (April 1892): 564. IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F126/28.

<sup>119</sup> Wood to Birdwood, 20 September 1891, Henry Trueman Wood Papers, IOR and Private Records, BL, Mss Eur F216/29.

<sup>120</sup> David Shavit, *The United States in Asia: A Historical Dictionary* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 27.

the colonial state. He held various meetings with existing social clubs to bring the matter to the notice of elites and visited native princes to garner their support.

His efforts met with enthusiastic reception. Bombay elites saw Ballantine and his missionary company as a route to take control over the representation of India at Chicago, independent of the colonial government's patronage. American discussants at these meetings also encouraged these plans. E. S. Williams, 'a reverend gentleman from the United States ... sent by that Government to awaken an interest in the people of different countries in the coming Columbian Exposition' (as described by the *Times of India*), presided at a meeting of the Cosmopolitan Club with Ballantine. Emphasising that he was acting on behalf of 'the President of the Republic, the Congress of the United States, the citizens of Chicago and the people', Williams delivered his country's invitation to 'the people of India to the Grand Fair, and to request them to send what India possessed best'.<sup>121</sup> Suggesting that India would profit from having her place 'in the grand Cosmopolitan Fair', he 'wished that the worthy Consul would try his best to represent India successfully in the American Exhibition'.<sup>122</sup> The message was clear. India's national representation at the international event no longer depended on the official grant provided by the Government of India. With the help of the American government, the Indian national building could be installed in Chicago, independent of the colonial state's sanction and funds.

To this end, by July 1892 the American organisers had already reserved 'in the Exhibition grounds, space for a special Indian Section, as a free grant, measuring 200,000 sq. ft. at the discretion of their Bombay Consul'.<sup>123</sup> In addition to reserving space, the American organisers emptied their own pockets to ensure the construction of the Indian Pavilion. The only condition — an establishment of a 'syndicate with a guaranteed capital of \$125,000' to take up the space 'within thirty days of the grant' — was already fulfilled by a 'private syndicate at Chicago, who [had] already subscribed on the spot, amongst themselves ... a capital of \$300,000'.<sup>124</sup> To secure the space further, the Chicago syndicate 'invite[d] Indian capitalists to cooperate with them by subscribing a part of the further capital required', and called for 'representative members of all communities in Bombay' to organise a 'corporation in India, in connection with the one already started in Chicago, with headquarters at Bombay, to secure a thorough and profitable Indian representation'.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> 'The World's Fair at Chicago', *The Times of India*, 10 Feb 1892, 3.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> 'India and the Chicago Exhibition', *The Times of India*, 23 July 1892.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

Many attendees at the meeting organised by Ballantine on 21 July 1892 at the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society voiced ‘sympathy with its object’. They agreed on ‘the eminent desirability to organise a thorough representation of Indian life, products, manufactures, and arts’.<sup>126</sup> The gathering culminated with the birth of a local committee, which sought to raise awareness and support for the cause, even reaching out to Dadabhai Naoroji.<sup>127</sup>

The main point celebrated at the occasion, the immediate commercial benefits, reflected the rhetoric of *swadeshi*. The summary of the benefits of representing India circulated in the newspaper suggested that the attendance of ‘European, American, Asiatic merchants, business men, capitalists, and manufacturers, among the visitors to the World’s fair... particularly liberal and wealthy Americans’ would give an incentive to widen demand and increase production of Indian goods.<sup>128</sup> The summary continued that a ‘well organised movement’ set ‘on foot in India itself’ to promote her goods would instigate ‘their future demand, which [would] promote [the commodities’] continued production’.<sup>129</sup>

This focus on advantages offered by Chicago quickly turned into criticism against the Government of India. The summary emphasised:

While the Governments of almost all the civilized countries in the world have granted large sums of money for the adequate representation of their respective countries at the World’s great fair, the like of which the world is not likely to see for many years, the Government of India alone, as far as we are aware, have not yet done anything for the representation of this great country.<sup>130</sup>

The Government of India’s oversight and the ineffectiveness of the Royal Commission was starkly contrasted by the enthusiasm of ‘the [American] promoters of the Exhibition’, who were ‘desirous to see India fully represented ... and have with that view instructed the American Consul here to give every facility to intending exhibitors’.<sup>131</sup> The space given to the Indian Pavilion was, the summary of the meeting pointed out, ‘quite apart from any space that might be allowed to them in the British Section and its colonies’.<sup>132</sup> Recognising that space in these international exhibitions ‘[was] an object of much value’, this summary declared that India’s

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid; Digby to Wood, 29 August 1892, Solomon Digby File, IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F 216/35.

<sup>128</sup> ‘India and the Chicago Exhibition’, *The Times of India*, 23 July 1892.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



ability to claim her national building untethered to the Victoria House was a sign of India's international prominence independent of the Raj.<sup>133</sup> In a way, the story of the Indian Pavilion offers an earlier example of Indian representation being secured on the international domain by triangulating the colonised and coloniser binary.<sup>134</sup>

In addition to the transnational cooperation with lay communities, Ballantine also knocked on the doors of what Samuel Digby described as 'some of the leading Native States'.<sup>135</sup> The British Commission closely watched Ballantine's movements recorded on Indian newspapers. Noting the attention the Indian newspapers paid to Ballantine, Digby denied any fruitful outcome from the former's visits. He wrote in consecutive reports on 29 and 30 August 1892, 'I hardly think he will do much there unless he is backed by the Indian authorities', followed by the second letter in which he repeated, 'I doubted if he will do much there (native states)'.<sup>136</sup> However, Digby's assessment was off the mark. The native princes' direct engagement with the American Consul took the Indian government by surprise, and triggered much anxiety.

In the years leading to 1893, Ballantine's direct engagement with native princes to have India represented in Chicago completely evaded the surveillance of the colonial state. Even a year after the Exposition, the Government of India remained oblivious to the deal struck between Ballantine and the Gwaekad of Baroda. Their relationship was picked up by the Government's radar only on 18 January 1894, when the Baroda Durbar asked for permission to donate the exhibited objects at the Exposition to the Chicago Museum. The colonial state quickly noticed that 'the Durbar did not employ [Tellery & co.] to exhibit [its contributions]', and found it 'impossible to say' where the Durbar's exhibits were located.<sup>137</sup> Ten days later, the Assistant Secretary of the Foreign Department urged with much frustration, 'I think we should first clear up the point as to how the Baroda exhibits went to Chicago. Don't our papers show?'<sup>138</sup> The route through which the objects of the Baroda Durbar reached America continued to puzzle them for weeks.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> For a similar idea of triangulation of the binary, see Pederson, *The Guardian*.

<sup>135</sup> The letters to Wood from other commissioners written on 16 February 1892, 16 May 1892, 8 June 1892 all express their concern with the Indian Tea District Association. Chicago Exhibition 1893: General administrative correspondence 1891-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/10/11; Digby to Wood 29 August 91, Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> 'Presentation of certain exhibits to the Museum at Chicago by the Baroda Durbar', 28 January 1894. Foreign Department Internal. Pros. April 1894. Nos. 17-20. National Archive of India.

On 6 February of 1894, the Deputy Secretary identified the ‘culprit’, stating that ‘the exhibits which Baroda wishes to present to the Museum at Chicago’ were indeed ‘sent direct in the first instance through Mr. Ballantine, who was the United State consul at Bombay’.<sup>139</sup> Noting that Ballantine became a vehicle through which other ‘private exhibitors made their arrangements’, the letter referred to the ‘Jaipur Case’ to re-affirm the rules regarding the native states — ‘any communication with foreign Governments must be conducted through Her Majesty’s government’.<sup>140</sup>

Given that the Baroda Durbar’s request unfolded around the ‘Jaipur Case’ from the moment the Foreign Department received the Durbar’s enquiry, we must turn briefly to the Jaipur Case. The ‘Jaipur Case’ referred to the demands made by the Maharaja of Jaipur after the Jaipur Exhibition of 1885.<sup>141</sup> The Maharaja had requested permission to distribute the Exhibition’s catalogue to foreign countries. He drew a list of recipients which included Great Britain (India Office, South Kensington, India Institute at Oxford), Scotland (‘for the principal Museum in Scotland’), Ireland (‘for the principal Museum in Ireland’), Belgium (Brussel Museum), Holland (Antwerp Museum), France (Paris, Lyon), Italy (Rome, Milan, Naples), Germany (Berlin, Leipzig), Austria (Vienna), Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg), and America (Philadelphia, Washington, New York).<sup>142</sup> As the list indicates, the Maharaja picked major cities and national organisations of western countries.

Initially, the Secretary of the Foreign Department expressed no concern, only highlighting that the Maharaja should under no circumstances directly ‘address any Foreign Governments or persons of high rank’ or ‘have anything to do with them’.<sup>143</sup> Simultaneously, the officials of the Foreign Department acknowledged the Maharaja’s request as an important matter to be addressed, and suggested that the catalogue be distributed by the Government of India or the Secretary of State with a revised list of ‘public museums and institutions’, excluding ‘any Foreign Governments or high political personages’.<sup>144</sup>

A close examination of the correspondence exchanged between March 1884 and April 1885 brings to light the very delicate issue that the relationship between princely states and Foreign Governments presented to the colonial state. The Secretary to the Foreign Department

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<sup>139</sup> Deputy Secretary, WMC, 6 February 1894, Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Publication and distribution of the illustrated “memorials of the Jaipur Exhibition, 1885”’, Foreign Department Internal A, NAI, Pros. April 1885, Nos. 102-117.

<sup>142</sup> H.M. Durand to E.R.C. Bradford, 29 May 1884, Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> 9 May 1884, Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> 29 May 1884, Ibid.

revealed this sense of anxiety in a letter written on 9 May 1884. He confessed, ‘if a Native State begins at once corresponding with foreign societies of any kind, it might be very difficult to draw the line.’<sup>145</sup> He further explained that the princely state’s private engagement with ‘a museum or other non-political body’ would be difficult for the colonial state to ‘properly interfere, or wish to interfere’.<sup>146</sup> Thus, the colonial state saw any kind of contact between native princes and foreign institutions or people — irrespective of their affiliation with a government — as a hindrance to the firm establishment of colonial sovereignty. The Secretary concluded that the Maharaja of Jaipur should send his gifts only through the India Office, eradicating any direct contact between the Indian prince and foreign states. Accordingly, on 3 March 1885, the Secretary composed a revised list of recipients for the Jaipur Exposition catalogue, substituting ‘the India Office, the British Museum, Brussels, Amsterdam, Naples’, with ‘The Indian Museum (Calcutta), Madras Museum, Bombay Museum, Lahore, Lucknow Museum’, curtailing the ambit of the Jaipur Durbar to the borders of the subcontinent.<sup>147</sup>

Eight years later, the Baroda Durbar’s request triggered precisely the same response from the Foreign Department of the Indian Government. Discouraging any ‘direct communications between the Durbar and the Foreign Consuls’, the Assistant Secretary described the Durbar’s request as ‘an instance of how Native States may be dragged into direct correspondence with Foreign Governments and their consuls’.<sup>148</sup> A day later, 19 January 1894, the Deputy Secretary, then unaware of the Ballantine-Baroda alliance, warned that ‘it would appear [most] objectionable’ if the Durbar sent objects ‘directly through American Consul’.<sup>149</sup> To their dismay, what they feared was already well underway.

The Indian Government’s responses to both the ‘Jaipur Case’ and the Baroda case point to the intricate relationship between sovereignty and the ability to communicate with foreign states. The Government of India had always feared the Indian princes’ ability to forge foreign contacts, especially during the latter’s travel abroad. Whether assigning Colonel Meliss to handle ‘all the official communications with Maharajah Sir Pratab Singh’ during his stay in England in 1897, or preventing any direct reach — even in writing — to the Queen, the Viceroy of India carefully supervised the princes’ physical and written meetings with foreign persons

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<sup>145</sup> 9 May 1884, Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> 3 March 1885, Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> 18 January 1894. ‘Presentation of certain exhibits to the Museum at Chicago by the Baroda Durbar’, 28 January 1894. Foreign Department Internal, NAI, Pros. April 1894. Nos. 17-20.

<sup>149</sup> 19 January 1894, Ibid.

and bodies.<sup>150</sup> Some princes eluded their clutches by making sudden ‘detours’. The Raja of Kapurthala, who requested to visit America for the Columbian Exposition for six months and Europe without warning, ventured onwards to Vienna to seek a meeting with the Emperor and Count Kalnoky.<sup>151</sup> When the Nawab of Baroda asked to visit Chicago to attend the Exposition, the Viceroy reacted with immense suspicion and encouraged ‘somebody [to be] with him on the continent as he might go to Foreign Courts’.<sup>152</sup> It was not until Lord Curzon’s viceroyalty that the mobility of native princes was restricted and relied wholly on the permission of the government.<sup>153</sup>

If the ‘Jaipur Case’ showed the colonial state’s success in containing the ambit of the Maharaja, the Baroda Durbar’s evading of the colonial radar exposed the weak spot of colonial sovereignty. When it came to representational sovereignty of Indian princes within the festive domain of international expositions and the symbolic ‘national’ houses that they hosted, the colonial state could easily lose sight of the princes. Indeed, the Gwaekar’s negotiation with Ballantine must be read as an act of resistance. The Secretary to the Foreign Department wrote in 1894 that the Government of India had ‘suggested... that Durbar give Messrs. Tellery the preference as agents in connection with the Chicago Exhibition’.<sup>154</sup> The letter concluded with much emphasis, ‘but the *Baroda Durbar sent its exhibits through the American Consul at Bombay*’.<sup>155</sup> In choosing Ballantine as the conduit through which the materials representing India would reach the India Pavilion, the princely state of Baroda took the hand offered by the Government of the United States, ignoring the recommendations of the colonial government.

Even in the cases where native princes followed the suggestions of the Government, they put colonial state into the shade. Apart from the Gwaekar of Baroda, many other native princes contributed to the Indian Pavilion. They mainly turned to the designated third party endorsed by the state, S. J. Tellery. A wealthy Austrian trader, Tellery served as a private agent to many rajas including the Nawab of Hyderabad, the Gwaekar of Baroda, the Maharaja of

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<sup>150</sup> Letters from India, Papers relating to Indian States, Box 23. IOR and Private Papers, BL, IOR/L/PS/7/379; no 164-762] f.640, 689.

<sup>151</sup> Indian States Papers: Home Correspondence, 1893. IOR and Private Papers, BL, IOR/L/PS/7/371, Nos.6-1701, f. 225, 1477.

<sup>152</sup> Id., f.535.

<sup>153</sup> Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20; More on the Gwaekar and travel, see Teresa Segra-Garcia, ‘Baroda, The British Empire and the World, C. 1880-1930’, unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Cambridge (2010), 36-52.

<sup>154</sup> 24 February 1894. ‘Presentation of certain exhibits to the Museum at Chicago by the Baroda Durbar’, 28 January 1894. Foreign Department Internal, NAI, Pros. April 1894. Nos. 17-20.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

Patiala, and the Raja of Kapurthala. He worked as an exporter of Indian art industries with offices in 'Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Simla, London, and New York'.<sup>156</sup> Considering that he had established his business only in 1888, the rapid spread of these branches, and the number of patrons he had accumulated suggest that he had considerable acumen, and was able to work with both the native princes and the officials of the British Raj.

Tellery presented himself to both parties as a merchant 'with the main object of reviving in India the various art industries ... and of creating a demand for the same not only in India but in foreign countries'.<sup>157</sup> As such, when the Government of India decided to aid the Indian Pavilion, in addition to granting '40,000 rupees to the Indian Tea District Association', it also selected Tellery as the second recipient of '10,000 rupees'.<sup>158</sup> This grant allowed him to purchase significant space within the Pavilion.

Indeed, in his conquest of the Pavilion, Tellery defeated smaller companies who applied directly to the Royal Commission. As E. H. Lloyd wrote to Wood on 6 October 1892, even 'Blechynden', a tradesman affiliated to the Commission, struggled 'to get the space in the main building, which ha[d] been granted (for the few poor Indian firms that have applied direct to us), for Tellery'.<sup>159</sup> To the Commission, Tellery proved to be an untameable force who even encroached on the space of the small companies. Lloyd continued:

Do you not think it would be rather unfair that men like Ardeshir and Bhungara should have their space reduced from about 750 sq. ft to 100 sq. ft (which will have to be done to get them into the 500 sq. ft allotment) and then Messr Tellery to come beside them with an exhibit of 2,500 sq. ft.<sup>160</sup>

In this battle over space, Tellery exercised more authority than other firms. For instance, when Blechynden 'got a promise of 2,500 sq.ft. from the Americans for an Indian Exhibit in addition to the 500 sq.ft' that Wood asked for from the Exposition Executive on 9 August 1892, Wood and his Secretary Lloyd discussed the necessity of ensuring that 'whatever allotments of space are made should be made direct to the Royal Commission and they after dealing with their own

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<sup>156</sup> File S. I April 1902-2-8 Claims of Mr. S.J. Tellery against the Patiala, Dholpur and Kashmir States, IOR and Private Papers, BL, IOR/R/1/1/277: 1901-1902.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Edmund H. Lloyd to Wood, 6 October 1892, Chicago Exhibition 1893, General administrative correspondence and telegrams from Henry Trueman Wood as Secretary to the British Commissioners in Chicago. 1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/10/12.

<sup>160</sup> Lloyd to Wood, 10 October 1892, Ibid.

Indian Exhibitors will allot anything to spare to Mr. Blechynden'.<sup>161</sup> In contrast, Tellery made direct claims over space, even when negotiating with the Royal Commission.

Tellery also maintained a good relationship with the Commission. Upon hearing Ardeshir and Bhumgara's intention to write 'articles to the Indian papers condemning the commission for not assisting them in making their exhibit', Tellery assured Wood, via his assistant Lloyd, that 'he ha[d] no feelings hostile to the Commission and if such articles appear he personally [would] contradict them and say that on no occasion has he asked anything from Victoria House but what everything possible has been done to assist him.'<sup>162</sup>

While Tellery's pursuit of friendly relationship with the Commission and the Government of India gave a sense of control to the latter, ultimately his position benefitted his princely patrons. His governing of the majority of space within the Indian Pavilion created direct links to the Indian princes, whose donation filled his allotted territory. Indeed, the audience viewed Tellery as representing the princely states. The official report recorded:

The Indian Building, which cost \$15,000, was built as a bazaar in which Mr. S. J. Tellery, one of the leading East Indian traders, was to carry on his trade under the patronage of the native rulers of Hyderabad, Joodpoor, Patteeala, Kapoorthella, Mahoor, Jheend, Kerowlee and Kutch.<sup>163</sup>

Even with the colonial state's official financial support, Tellery, by occupying most space, appeared to the public as serving the sole needs of the Indian princes. As such, he not only enabled these princes' possession over their parts of India to materialise in the (East) Indian Pavilion, but also opened up the 'national' space of the Indian Pavilion to be claimed by the quasi-sovereigns.

Of course, the participation of Indian elites and princes at the Exposition was not an anomaly. As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, native princes and intelligentsia proved indispensable for the supply of objects as well as knowledge at these events. However, given the active support initiated by the Government of the United States, in place of the British Raj, the participation of Bombay elites and the princes must be understood as a concerted effort at establishing India's national house in the White City as distinct and disconnected from 'Victoria House'. In this way, the space of the Indian Pavilion — similar to other national

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Lloyd to Wood, 6 November 1892, Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> World's Columbian Exposition, *The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, (St.Louis, MO: N.D. Thompson Publishing, 1893), np.

buildings — exposed political tensions of the British Raj across international, imperial, and national scales.

While the India Pavilion stood for the Indian ‘nation’, it was not given the opportunity to celebrate its ‘national’ day. The story of India’s history unfurled at another part of the Exposition, the Parliament of the World’s Religions. We will now turn to the Parliament, where the Hindu monk sent by Indian princes, Vivekananda, stood amongst other envoys of religious organisations.

### **Representational Sovereignty in the Sacred Space**

*When, therefore, it was announced that in connection with the Chicago Exhibition there would be a Parliament of Religions, the Raja of Ramnad and other leading Hindu gentlemen of Madras decided to send Norendro Nath Dutt to it.*  
- *The Statesman and Friend of India*, 8 July 1902<sup>164</sup>

The Parliament was a panoply of colour on stage. By bringing together practitioners of the ten world’s religions, the organising Committee aimed to create a religious congress ‘more widely representative of “peoples, nations, and tongues” than any assemblage that ha[d] ever been convened’.<sup>165</sup> A variety of faiths appeared together on the stage. Richard H. Seager estimated that out of 194 papers, 152 were on Christianity, twelve on Buddhism, eleven on Judaism, eight on Hinduism, two on Islam, two on Parsees, two on Shintoism, two on Confucianism, one on Taoism, and one on Jainism.<sup>166</sup> Although outnumbered by Christian speakers, the non-Christian participants carried equally significant weight as the leaders ‘[holding] sway over the consciences of men’ in the ‘far-off lands’.<sup>167</sup>

Indeed, rather than the sheer number of delegates on stage, markers of ethnicity, the number of followers, and distinct history verified the legitimacy of each religion. When non-Christian delegates were introduced, the audience was given a little lecture on their nations’

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<sup>164</sup> ‘The Late Swami Vivekananda’, *The Statesman and Friend of India*, 8 July 1902, in Basu (ed.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 661-662.

<sup>165</sup> Charles Carroll Bonney, quoted in *Report of the President to the Board of Directors*, Appendix A (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1898), 326.

<sup>166</sup> Richard Hughes Seager, *History of Buddhism in America* (Boston: Shambhala, 1986), 87.

<sup>167</sup> ‘Representatives of the World’s Leading Faiths Meet To-day’, *The New York Times*, 11 Sept 1893, 5.

size, population, and history. Both the organisers and participants emphasised the number of followers to outline the extent of their reach. Barrows described Dharmapala as speaking ‘in behalf [sic] of four hundred and seventy-five millions of the followers of Buddha Gautama’, and Dharmapala also used the same number to deliver ‘the good wishes of 475,000,000 of Buddhists’.<sup>168</sup> Vivekananda expressed his gratitude to the organisers ‘in the name of the millions and millions of Hindoo people of all classes and sects’, and the Jain representative from Gujarat, Virchand Gandhi, introduced his faith as ‘professed by 1,500,000 of India’s most peaceful and law-abiding citizens’.<sup>169</sup>

In addition to the awe-inspiring number of their followers, non-Christian representatives repeatedly stressed the antiquity of their religions. Bidding good wishes to ‘young America’, the Armenian representative, Tiheraz, described Armenia as ‘the oldest country of the old world ... twice the cradle of the human race’.<sup>170</sup> Almost all of India’s representatives used the phrase ‘India as the mother of religion’.<sup>171</sup> Virchand Gandhi introduced Jainism as ‘older than Buddhism, similar to it in its ethics, but different from it in its psychology’, and Dharmapala conveyed the history of Buddhism by stressing the number of centuries it prevailed in Asia, ‘which has made Asia mild, and which is to-day, in its twenty-fourth century of existence, the prevailing religion of the country’.<sup>172</sup> P. C. Majumdar stressed India’s ancient history in his introduction of the Brahmo Samaj. He exclaimed, ‘India, the ancient among ancients, the elder of the elders, lives to-day with her old civilization, her old laws, and her profound religion’.<sup>173</sup> Both by historicising their religion and enumerating their devotees, the non-Christian delegates justified the authority of their faith, and the nation in which their religions ‘originated’. Strikingly, decades later in 1937 the very same reasons were cited to assert India’s claim to a position in the League of Nations. Sir Govind Pradhan would claim that India ‘with her vast area and large population and her ancient civilization ... should be treated justly’.<sup>174</sup>

The Parliament’s celebration of diversity and the effort to authenticate non-Christian delegates rendered religion synonymous with civilisation, antiquity, race, and nation. Thus, it provided an international stage where different religious, hence ‘national’, representatives

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<sup>168</sup> Barrows, *John Henry Barrows*, 278; Jones, *A Chorus*, 53.

<sup>169</sup> Jones, *A Chorus*, 57, 55.

<sup>170</sup> Jones, 56.

<sup>171</sup> Chakrabarti for instance spoke, ‘I belong to a religion which is now decrepit with age’, and Vivekananda ‘in the name of the mother of all religions’. See Jones, *A Chorus*, 50, 55.

<sup>172</sup> Jones, *A Chorus*, 53.

<sup>173</sup> Id., 40-41.

<sup>174</sup> Cited in McQuade, ‘Terrorism, Law, and Sovereignty’, 149.



gathered together for sixteen days of discussion. As this section will show, like the Indian Pavilion, the space occupied by Indian religions at the Parliament revealed much about the complex social and political milieu of the subcontinent.

Between June 1892 and May 1893, on six occasions the U.S. Consul General in Calcutta sent official invitations to the Secretary of State of the Government of India. The letter requested the Government of India to send representatives to the World's Congress Auxiliary of the Columbian Exposition. The president of the World's Congress Auxiliary, Charles C. Bonney, declared that the twenty congresses aimed to 'to sum up human progress in the respective departments to the year 1893', to address 'the living problems which still await solution', and to discover 'the means by which further progress may be made'.<sup>175</sup> The twenty congresses endeavoured to discuss the shared problems of the world that the 'governments and peoples of all the participating countries' could find solutions for and discover useful 'means of further progress'.<sup>176</sup> As 'a matter of great international importance', the letter encouraged the Government of India 'to have India fairly represented'.<sup>177</sup> However, despite these repeated invitations, indeed demands, for India's participation — including personalised letters from the American inventor, Elisha Gray, who chaired the Congress of Electricians — the Government of India expressed 'regret [for] [its] inability to send delegates to any of the congresses which will be held in connection with the Chicago Exposition'.<sup>178</sup>

The British Raj's rejection of the Congress Auxiliary created an opportunity for liberal religious organisations to promote themselves on the international stage. Existing religious organisations in India represented three out of the ten world's religions selected by the Parliament — Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism.<sup>179</sup> The Brahmo Samaj and the Theosophical Society sent most delegates. By 1893, both groups had already established transnational networks. Beginning with its founder Ram Mohun Roy, the Brahmo Samaj had been exchanging religious missionaries with the Unitarian Church in Bristol and New England. For the Parliament, the Samaj sent two representatives, B. B. Nagarkar from Bombay and P. C.

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<sup>175</sup> 'Invitation to the Government of India to send Representatives to the "World's Congress Auxiliary" to the Columbian Exposition Chicago 1893', Foreign Department, Internal-B, NAI, March 1893, Nos. 535-37.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> While many more representatives were officially invited, such as S. Parthasarathy Aiyangar, Manilal Madhubhai Dvivedi, Mohan Dev, Lakshmi Narain, secretary of the Kayasth community, they delivered their speeches in absentee or spoke at other congresses of the Auxiliary. See Rajagopal Chattopadhyaya, *World's Parliament of Religions, 1893: Participation from the Indian Subcontinent and the 1993 Parliament* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1995), 8-10.

Majumdar from Calcutta. They both sat on the Advisory Council and the Selection Committee of the Parliament. Majumdar had already embarked on a lecture tour in America in the early 1880s, long before his appearance at the Parliament.<sup>180</sup> His post-Parliament itinerary, which included the seventy-fifth anniversary of the American Unitarian Association, also followed the arrangement made by his Unitarian hosts.

As an organisation with bases both in America and in India, the Theosophical Society also used its existing networks to secure its proper representation.<sup>181</sup> To an extent, the Theosophists represented most of the ten world religions. As the subtitle of an article in the *Washington Post* explained, ‘all kinds of Theosophy [were] represented at the Parliament of Religions, Buddhists and the like’.<sup>182</sup> The Theosophical Society introduced as its own members, W. Q. Judge, Annie Besant, Cooper Oakley, Henrietta Mueller, the Brahminist Chakravarti, and the only non-Japanese Buddhist, Angarika Dharmapala, of the Mahabodhi Society, whose presentations were written by its president, Henry Olcott.<sup>183</sup> Chakravarti ‘was to correct the misconception that Theosophy was Buddhism and Brahmanism’, and Dharmapala, ‘although chosen by the Buddhists to represent them’, was expected to deliver a paper on ‘Theosophy as underlying all religions’.<sup>184</sup>

Other delegates arrived in Chicago to represent Indian religious communities. Jeanne Sorabjee and Jivanji Jamshedji Mody stood on the stage for the Parsee community, while Virchand Gandhi, the lawyer representing Jainism on behalf of the monk Archarya Vijayanandsuri, enjoyed the public encouragement of Bombay citizens. Citing a report from Milan, an article titled ‘Prophets Out of Their Country’ boasted Bombay’s international fame ‘for possessing great men, and women’.<sup>185</sup> On their return, a celebration hosted by M. G. Ranade awaited Gandhi in Bombay, while another one headed by the Raja of Ramnad awaited Vivekananda in Madras.

Unlike these representatives, Vivekananda arrived in Chicago without the assistance of a specific community or even with an official invitation.<sup>186</sup> Rather, like the objects that filled the India Pavilion in the White City, Vivekananda was carried by the support of native princes

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<sup>180</sup> For more on Majumdar and American Unitarians, see David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 22.

<sup>181</sup> On its cross-imperial ‘interactional history’, see Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, 55-82.

<sup>182</sup> ‘All Kinds of Theosophy’, *The Washington Post*, 10 Sep 1893, 10.

<sup>183</sup> Olcott’s Diary (Col.), roll 5. Sr No. 642, NMML, New Delhi, India.

<sup>184</sup> ‘All Kinds of Theosophy’, *The Washington Post*, 10 Sep 1893, 10.

<sup>185</sup> ‘Prophets out of their country’, *The Times of India*, 26 June 1894, 4.

<sup>186</sup> All the five Japanese representatives were neither officially invited nor received institutional support. See James E. Ketelaar, ‘The Reconvening of Babel: Eastern Buddhism and the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions’, in Eric J. Ziolkowski (ed.), *A Museum of Faiths*, 251-303.

who seized upon the Indian Government's indifference to step into the international event. However, Vivekananda's royal patronage differed from that of the objects at the Exposition in one crucial respect. His patrons ruled over small *thikanas* rather than large princely states.

*Thikana*, an 'administrative cum socio-economic unit' in a state or an estate, symbolised authority rooted in the soil.<sup>187</sup> Although created in the Mughal Empire as a way of consolidating power over its vast territory, they often cherished a much longer history. The kingdoms of Limbdi, Ramnad, Mysore, and Khetri, the main patrons of Vivekananda, dated as far back as the early fifteenth century.<sup>188</sup> The State of Limbdi was ruled by the Jhala clan of Rajputs, who originated from Gujarat and settled across Rajasthan.<sup>189</sup> As a princely state, it received a nine gun-salute from the British. The estate of Ramnad existed as a zamindari prior to its independence in the seventeenth century. Although an important estate in the Madras Presidency, its status was relegated once more to the zamindari title in 1803, its power usurped by the British Raj. As we have seen in the previous chapter, like the neighbouring prince, Chamarajendra Wodeyar X of Mysore, who made 'strenuous efforts ... to imbue Mysore with a national identity', the Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskara Sethupathi, continued to develop 'royal symbols and values under colonial rule'.<sup>190</sup>

In the case of Khetri, the state in which Vivekananda dwelled for several months as a *parivrājak*, the *thikana* was in a more complex system than simple diarchy. Khetri was one of five tehsils of the Jhunjhunu Nizamats within the Jaipur State. The Jaipur State paid annual tribute to the British Government, while simultaneously receiving revenue from *thikandars* and *jagidars* from regions spread across Rajasthan: Amarsarwati, Jhunjhunuwati, Udaipurwati, Sikarwati, Fatehpurwati to Khandelawati. As the second biggest *thikana* in Jaipur and Rajputana after Sikar, Khetri enjoyed no obligation to pay tribute to either the British or the Jaipur State. This position as an intermediary between the two strong power holders originated from the history of the Shekhawat dynasty.

The Shekhawat chiefs had expanded their territory through the exchange of services. The chiefs of Khetri had offered protection to the Jaipur State against Maratha threats which

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<sup>187</sup> Satish Chandra, 'A Few Documents Pertaining to Zamindari from Thikana Records in the Former Jaipur State', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 29: Part I (1967), 261.

<sup>188</sup> Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>189</sup> John McLeod, *Sovereignty, Power, Control: Politics in the States of Western India, 1916-1947* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999), 275.

<sup>190</sup> Nair, *Mysore Modern*, 11. Pamela G. Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6; also, see Jennifer Howes, *The Courts of Pre-colonial South India: Material Culture and Kingship* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

gained them the title of ‘Maharaja’. The British also ‘enter[ed] [into] pact[s] with Khetri, granting it autonomy’ from the Jaipur durbar in order to check the power of the Jaipur State.<sup>191</sup> Nonetheless, the chiefs of Khetri chose to pay *khiraj* (tribute) ‘to the Jaipur durbar’, declaring it a tribute to their ‘kinship rather than sovereignty of the [Jaipur] durbar’.<sup>192</sup> By doing so, Khetri placed itself on an almost equal standing with the Jaipur durbar — it did not see itself as subservient to it.<sup>193</sup>

Although the size of the Shekhawati estate diminished with time, by the nineteenth century, the Raja of Khetri together with the Raja of Sikar ruled ‘nearly a third of the Jeypore State’.<sup>194</sup> This territorial expansion gave Khetri a degree of leverage over both the British and Jaipur State, enjoying the ‘status and power of Princely States [holding] durbars like the Maharaja of Jaipur’.<sup>195</sup> The colonial state also noted this point, as the Jhunjhunu Gazetteer advised officials to treat the territory ‘with discretion, in other words with a light though strong hand’, for despite its ‘peaceful’ and ‘not disloyal’ disposition, the legacy of the Shekawati dynasty remained ‘not very ancient’ and had ‘not yet faded from its memory’.<sup>196</sup>

In their various ways, Vivekananda’s princely patrons, though not major power players in the larger schema of Indian history, maintained a strong pride in their patria. They sought to — and to a certain extent did — overcome their limited sovereignty, for instance, by sending Vivekananda to the Parliament. After all, the general programme of the Parliament issued in October 1892 emphasised ‘the largest practicable participation of foreign peoples and governments in the whole series of the congresses’.<sup>197</sup> The organisers of the Congress Auxiliary ‘confidently believed that the involvement of the foreign government would promote, strengthen, and extend those fraternal relations and mutual benefits’.<sup>198</sup> Thus, by supporting Vivekananda to represent Hinduism at the Parliament, these native princes acted as if they were

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<sup>191</sup> K.L. Sharma, *Caste, Feudalism and Peasantry: The social formation of Shekhawati* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), 69-70.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Id., 57.

<sup>194</sup> *Rajasthan District Gazetteers* (Jaipur: Directorate of District Gazetteers, Govt. of Rajasthan, 1962), 42.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. While they shared pride of belonging to the Shekawati dynasty, the state of Khetri and Sikar were often embroiled in conflict. See File No.53 of 1895, ‘Papers connected with the Sikar and Khetri claims to compensation under Salt-Agreement’. IOR, BL, IOR/R/2/132/16: 1895. ‘Memorandum reg: administration in Khetri on the Ajit Sarg Band and Ajit Sammand Bandh Swarup by Raja Ajit Singh of Khetri’. Khetri File number 1895, Jaipur Residency 22.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> ‘Invitation to the Government of India to send Representatives to the “World’s Congress Auxiliary” to the Columbian Exposition Chicago 1893’, Foreign Department, Internal-B. March 1893, Nos. 535-37, National Archives of India.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

‘foreign governments’ participating in the international conference aimed at bolstering universal fraternity. This was reflected in Maharaja Ajit Singh’s celebratory speech dedicated to Vivekananda. He described the monk’s success at the Parliament as a contribution to India as well as to ‘the development of the world (*sath vishav ke vikas mein*)’.<sup>199</sup> Thus, unlike other Indian delegates, Vivekananda was the only ‘official’ representative supported by India’s old ruling body, ‘Indian India’ as it was then known.

Vivekananda fully used his patronage and understood its rich symbolism. While he confessed in various interviews in 1896 that ‘[he] was sent there by the Rajah of Mysore, and some other friends’, he did not reveal his royal patrons on the stage of the Parliament.<sup>200</sup> Instead, he used his detachment from existing religious institutions as the basis that allowed him to ‘represent Hinduism ... in the sense of race and religion’, as it encompassed India.<sup>201</sup> The turban bestowed on him by Ajit Singh discussed in Chapter 1 further consolidated his authority over Hinduism, as well as over India. An article in the *Muslim Sunrise* published in 1921 provides a rather amusing example of this.

Titled, ‘Had Seen Me Two Years Ago’, it described a Muslim man’s encounter with a Chicago lady by the name of ‘Mrs. Tatum’. Tatum, upon seeing the author insisted that ‘she had seen [him] more than two years ago in her dream just wearing the same turban and Indian dress.’<sup>202</sup> Confident of their previous encounter, she further wrote in her letter to the anonymous author of the article, ‘I have enjoyed reading your wonderful pamphlets — in that dream I had seen you with your arms folded, smiling, but sincere. I believe God sent you here.’<sup>203</sup> The man that she portrayed in her letter described the popular image of Vivekananda that was printed in a large size poster and distributed widely (see Image 10). Thus, through his consumption of Ajit Singh’s two gifts, Vivekananda began to build a tenacious stereotypical image of an ‘Indian’ that extended beyond religious affiliation and time, as the article was produced twenty years after his death.

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<sup>199</sup> Śarmā, *Rājasthāna Mem Svāmī*, vol. 2, 25.

<sup>200</sup> Interview from *The Echo*, *The Hindoo Patriot*, 28 December 1896, 18 July 1896, *The Hindoo Patriot*, from the *Sunday Times*, in Basu (ed.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 293; 289.

<sup>201</sup> Vivekananda to Alasinga, 20 Aug 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 44. Also see Vivekananda to Haridas Viharidas Deasi, Dewan of Junagad, 2 June 1894 in Id., 113.

<sup>202</sup> *Muslim Sunrise*, No. 1, (July 1921), 17.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.



Image 10. Swami Vivekananda poster<sup>204</sup>

If at the Parliament he had accentuated his territorial representation of Hinduism both explicitly and indirectly, upon his return to the subcontinent, Vivekananda began to justify his role as a ‘representative of Hinduism’ by highlighting his royal patrons. In February 1897, he told the *Madras Times* that he received pecuniary help from ‘the late Maharajah of Mysore and the Rajah of Ramnad’.<sup>205</sup> A few days later, he told the *Hindu* ‘that the Rajah of Ramnad [had] put the idea of the visit to Chicago into his head’.<sup>206</sup>

While disclosing his royal patronage, he also claimed more agency for himself. In the same interview with the *Madras Times*, he asserted that he made the journey to ‘get experience’.<sup>207</sup> This emphasis on experience reflected his theory that ‘the key-note of [India’s] national downfall [was] that we do not mix with other nations ... We never had opportunity to compare notes. We were Kupa-Mandukas (frogs in a well)’.<sup>208</sup> He projected a similar narrative in his interview with the *Hindu*. Although he did not neglect the role of the Raja of Ramnad in dispatching him as a delegate of Hinduism to the Parliament, he took ownership of the larger national task of ‘deluging the West’ with Indian spirituality. Insisting that ‘in early society, the leaders were not kings, not generals, but Rishis’, he insinuated that his authority had more weight in leading India than that of the kings.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>204</sup> Taken at the Sister Nivedita School Office, Calcutta, India.

<sup>205</sup> *The Madras Times, The Indian Mirror*, 7 February 1897, Basu (ed.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 130.

<sup>206</sup> *The Hindu, The Indian Mirror*, 11 February 1897, Id., 135-136.

<sup>207</sup> *The Madras Times, The Indian Mirror*, 7 February 1897, Id., 130.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> From the *The Hindu, The Indian Mirror*, 11 February 1897, Id., 135-136.

This inversion of power hierarchies was not merely fanciful imagination on the part of Vivekananda. As the story of Sethupathi discussed in Chapter 1 showed, the early patrons of Vivekananda to the Parliament quickly became his ‘disciples’. An article reporting on Ajit Singh’s attendance at the Queen’s jubilee also revealed this dynamic. Describing the reception provided by the ‘Hindus of Bombay’, the *Indian Spectator* explained that the gathering, led by Ranade, celebrated not ‘the political significance of his visit’, but ‘the moral, social and religious’ implications.<sup>210</sup> While citing Ranade’s speech, which expounded ‘Princes and Chiefs’ as ‘the natural leaders of society’, the article emphatically added,

the Prince is, further, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda... and the Maharaja owned that he owed much to the Swami Vivekananda not only as a spiritual guide but as one who inspired him with love of the practical western lore too, as well as with the desire for travel, for self-reform and for the regeneration of the community to which he belonged.<sup>211</sup>

If receiving the gift of Ajit Singh strengthened Vivekananda’s legitimacy both within the Ramakrishna Order and the Parliament, reciprocally, giving the gift of name and turban to the monk transformed the Maharaja, due to the transmissive nature of and the multiple impacts involved in the transaction of *dan* (gift).<sup>212</sup>

This narrative of the prince owing spiritual debt to a *sannyasi* first appeared in public after Vivekananda’s success at the Parliament. In a letter written in March 1895 — one copy of which Vivekananda published in *The Indian Mirror*, as Singh requested — the Maharaja delivered his gratitude to Vivekananda for his contribution to recovering the Indian spirit. He wrote,

As a head of this Durbar held today for this special purpose, I have much pleasure in conveying to you, in my own name and that of my subjects, the heartfelt thanks of this State for your worthy *representation* of Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, held at Chicago, in America... expressing our sincere gratitude for all the trouble you have taken in going to foreign countries, and to expound in the American Parliament the truths of our ancient religion, which we ever since hold so dear. It is certainly applicable to the pride of *India* that it has been fortunate in possessing the privilege of having secured so able a representative as yourself.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> *The Indian Spectator*, 31 October 1897, Id., 413-414.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> On this transmissive nature of gift-giving, see Jacob Copeman, ‘The Gift and Its Forms of Life in Contemporary India’, *Modern Asian Studies* 45: 5 (2001), 1051-1094.

<sup>213</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 7 May 1895, Id., 241-242. Emphasis added.

As this excerpt elucidates, Singh viewed the Parliament as an international gathering in which India and Hinduism were represented by Vivekananda. In a way, by revealing the ‘truths of [India’s] ancient religion’, Vivekananda extended the representational sovereignty of his rajas into the international event. This not only furthered the pride of the rajas, but also opened new avenues for Vivekananda to bolster his own legitimacy as a Hindu representative standing forth on behalf of India.

## Conclusion

The Columbian Exposition and the Parliament of the World’s Religions present us with new kinds of internationalism. The issue of representation carried as significant weight in nineteenth-century realms of festivals and religion as it did in the twentieth-century diplomatic leagues and congresses of nation-states. Both absence and presence revealed the status of a nation. Territorialising the Exposition ground emulated the political contentions of international relations. As the chapter has shown, each element of the Exposition, whether in national houses or national days, politicised space and became a site in which various scales of sovereignty could be acted out or subverted.

The space of the Indian Pavilion at the Exposition and that of Hinduism at the Parliament further challenge our existing understanding of nineteenth-century international events. Even without the official patronage of the Raj, India manifested itself on the ground in Chicago. Bombay elites and native princes circumvented the Government of India by holding hands with the Government of the United States to occupy the White City and represent India. If the Maharajas of large princely states territorialised India’s national building, the glorified rulers of *thikanas* celebrated the temporality of its emerging nationhood at the Parliament by sending Vivekananda as their representative of Hinduism. The patronage of Indian princes, in turn, allowed Vivekananda to assert his position as *the* representative of Hinduism.

Indian princes’ routes to the World’s Columbian Exposition exemplify the ‘holes’ of imperial sovereignty, as shown by Lauren Benton, and the fissure between practice and theory of sovereignty, as James Sheeshan has recently emphasised.<sup>214</sup> The native princes’ support of the Indian national building, whether with the assistance of the American government or

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<sup>214</sup> Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); James J. Sheehan, ‘The Problem of Sovereignty in European History’, *American Historical Review* 111: 1 (2016), 1–15.



through Tellery, demonstrated the relative easiness of transgressing the boundaries of the colonial state and imperial rule. Similar dynamics operated for the rulers of *thikanas* and the Parliament.

These representations of India in Chicago illustrate that in the late nineteenth century, internationalism was not merely an alternative channel to the imperial umbrella, or a source of triangulating the binary of colonised and coloniser. Rather, internationalism could also operate at the heart of empire and the imperial apparatus for the benefit of the colonised. The Indian princes as quasi-sovereigns exerted their authority *at* the Exposition, a type of event that has been previously understood as a tool and product of imperial and colonial control. Furthermore, unlike the ‘anomaly’ of India’s presence at the League, at the Chicago Exposition and the Parliament, India’s ‘authentic’ representation was sought out and accepted. Therefore, these two grand affairs of 1893 mark an interesting node in the history of internationalism, well beyond the perspective of *realpolitik*.

# CHAPTER THREE

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## DISORDERED UNIVERSALISM AND MULTIPLE LANDSCAPES OF BROTHERHOOD

Every year since 2014, the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi has paid tributes to the tragedy of 11 September 2001. While many other international leaders send solemn message to the world on this anniversary, Modi's condolences always harbour another subtext — to render 9/11 a commemorative date for India and for one specific person, Swami Vivekananda. He has sought to accomplish this task by bringing to the fore another international event on the same date, the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago in 1893. Modi's social media tweet on 10 September 2014 read, '11<sup>th</sup> September 1893 — the day Swami Vivekananda created history by his soul-stirring address at World Parliament of Religions in Chicago', followed by a copy of Vivekananda's speech released to the public on 11 September 2014.<sup>1</sup> Two years later in 2016, he announced that 'Swami Vivekananda's speech in Chicago demonstrated the strength of India's rich culture & the power of universal brotherhood and harmony.'<sup>2</sup> While the message of universal brotherhood reverberated in a babel of voices throughout the seventeen days of the Parliament, with the efforts of figures like Modi, the event held in 1893 has now taken on a new meaning. So has the figure of Vivekananda.

This chapter questions the event's much-vaunted universalism and Vivekananda's message. Despite the banner of 'goodwill toward[s] man', the Parliament of the World's Religions also accentuated the seamy underbelly of universalism.<sup>3</sup> Many orthodox Christians feared that its promotion of universal fraternity was an invitation to challenge the superiority of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> As the Asian delegates increasingly began to steal the spotlight, these views

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<sup>1</sup> Narendra Modi, Twitter post, 10 September 2014, 9:04 p.m., <https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/509915320182534144>.

<sup>2</sup> Modi, Twitter post, 10 September 2016, 8:45 p.m., <https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/774816166963535872>.

<sup>3</sup> 'A Parliament of Religions', *The Times of India*, 13 February 1894, 4.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, *A Chorus of Faith* (Chicago: The Unity Publishing Company, 1893), 320-325.

surfaced more prominently. Pamphlets dismissing the impact of Oriental delegates and highlighting the superiority of Christianity circulated across the world. The chairman of the Parliament, John Henry Barrows, even embarked on a journey to India and Japan to extinguish rumours of ‘Asian conquest’ over America. The immediate aftermath of the event also exposed some parochial concerns among the non-Christian delegates. With their return to their respective homelands, their statements on universalism were coloured by more particularistic interests. In reality, the ‘power’, to borrow Modi’s word, of the ‘peaceful gathering’ of world’s religions could not always withstand the buffeting of ‘the warring creeds’, and the event’s ‘harmony’ dissipated even before creating any real fraternity.<sup>5</sup>

Amidst the debates engulfing the Parliament, Vivekananda stood out, and his legacy and reputation survived the subsequent fate of the Parliament. His successful debut at the event came as a surprise to many, for, as we have seen in Chapter 2, he did not enjoy the support of any established religious organisation. He was an esteemed disciple of an illiterate Bengali mystic Ramakrishna Paramahansa, whose peculiar spirituality had caught the attention of selected Bengali elites and the renowned Oxford Sanskritist Max Müller.<sup>6</sup> As the protégé of a spiritual figure without any real institutional foothold, Vivekananda neither received official invitation to the Parliament nor benefitted from the transnational networks that the seven other Indian delegates enjoyed. Nonetheless, as *The Chicago Inter Ocean* stated, Vivekananda ‘was no doubt the star of the Parliament’, for ‘it was evident from the applause which greeted the Oriental about 5 o’clock, as in his orange garb he arose to speak, that had he spoken first instead of last some of the great audience might not have been present at the close of the session.’<sup>7</sup> His popularity gave him access to a highly mobile groups of bourgeois followers with whose support he carved out enduring spiritual enclaves, first in New York in 1896, and finally in Bengal in 1897.<sup>8</sup>

While the trope of universal brotherhood rhetorically ironed out the differences between the ‘warring creeds’, paradoxically, it also heightened underlying tensions between

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Hughes Seager, *The World’s Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago, 1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 89.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the relationship between Max Müller and Vivekananda, see Thomas Green, *Religion for a Secular Age: Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda and Vedānta* (London & New York, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Seager, *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism*, 338.

<sup>8</sup> The idea of ‘global bourgeoisie’ was discussed at the conference, *The Global Bourgeoisie: The Rise of the Middle Class in the Age of Empire*. Christof Dejung, University of Cambridge / Universität Konstanz; David Motadel, University of Cambridge / University of Edinburgh; Jürgen Osterhammel, Universität Konstanz, 27.08.2015–29.08.2015. For more on the Ramakrishna Mission see Gwilym Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission: The Making of a Modern Hindu Movement* (New Delhi, 2000).

them. It both consolidated and fractured the event, while breeding a protagonist who survived its demise. This chapter explores the complex terrain of universal brotherhood at the Parliament. How did the organisers and delegates create and use the term? What did it mean to each participant? What purposes did it intend to serve? How did Vivekananda navigate the diverse narratives of universal brotherhood that echoed sometimes in unison, at others in cacophony?

The chapter undertakes this task by moving through different scales of space. Layers of spatial analyses allow us to gain a better understanding of the event's many facets. Not only has the Parliament produced fragmented memories and legacies based on the regions of focus, but it was also through the Parliament that Vivekananda became both an icon of universalism and aggressive Hindu nationalism. As such, only by dissecting the layers of spaces, we can better understand the complexity of the event and its multiple effects, one of which included the birth of Vivekananda's international celebrity.

This chapter moves through four different planes. By putting Timothy Mitchell in conversation with Leela Gandhi, the first section juxtaposes the imperial world order of nineteenth century International Congress of Orientalists with the Parliament's utopian religious fraternity. In so doing, the chapter establishes the peculiar universalism of the Parliament that pluralised the imagined geography of brotherhood for the non-Christian representatives.

Next, the chapter explores the discursive space of universal brotherhood. Here, it challenges Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné's important contribution to the history of Asianism. Rather than seeing the Parliament as an international platform of Asian encounter, this section reveals the self-interests of the Asian delegates to highlight the rifts between them. Instead of Asianism, then, the chapter unearths one specific map of fraternity that emerged at the Parliament; an India-America brotherhood that left little room for Asia or Britain. It will investigate the Parliament's chairman, John Henry Barrows, and the Indian delegates' shared language of hospitality and intimacy through which they forged an alliance against Britain.

As the chapter moves back to the subcontinent, we will see that the collaborative transnational envisioning of a new world order belied the fragmented national landscape of religious representation. Immediately after the event, members of the Brahmo Samaj and the Theosophical Society launched a battle against Vivekananda over his right to represent Hinduism. As they questioned his legitimacy, one thing became clear. It was Vivekananda's detachment from either regional or organisational affiliations that allowed him to assume the role of an authentic and authoritative Hindu.

The tensions between nationalism and universalism were not the only forces at work.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Vivekananda's rise to international fame was not based solely on his authenticity, which many of his fellow Indian religionists denied. Rather, his success also depended on the ways he presented Hinduism as palatable to his international audience. Vivekananda deliberately rendered Hinduism as a religion of belonging rather than one of allegiance. Anybody, he showed, could *become* spiritual through Hinduism. In so doing, he catered to the interests of transatlantic bourgeoisie, and created a new category of religion untethered to nationality, ethnicity, or country. The significance of this, as the conclusion will show, lay not solely in the transnational movement of spiritualism or 'affective cosmopolitanism'.<sup>10</sup> It also exposed religion's potential to produce dislocated belongings that challenged the normative power of the state. Thus, the chapter argues that the Parliament, despite, or indeed because of, its lofty claims about universal brotherhood, bred disordered universalism, and multiple landscapes of brotherhood.

### **Locating the Parliament in the Terrains of Existing Scholarship**

The existing scholarship on the Parliament of the World's Religions has largely been dominated by historians of religion. As such, the debate has focused on the extent to which the event induced the birth of the category, 'world religions', and the discipline of comparative religious studies. Here, different conclusions are drawn across the transatlantic divide. In 1975, the British historian Eric Sharpe dismissed the Parliament's impact on the development of scientific religious studies.<sup>11</sup> He asserted that the discipline of religious study originated from the legacy of European Oriental scholarship rather than the one-off gathering of religious leaders. Decades later, around the time of the centennial celebration of the Parliament, a new spate of American scholarship emerged. The leading figure of this revitalised discussion, the American historian Richard Hughes Seager, argued that the Parliament signalled the birth of religious pluralism in both academic faculties as well as in the broader American social

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<sup>9</sup> By 'tensions' I do not mean that they were antithetical or incompatible. See Prasenjit Duara, 'The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism', *Journal of World History* 12: 1 (2001), 99–130.

<sup>10</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 138–143.

imaginary.<sup>12</sup> In 2005, Tomoko Masuzawa shifted the focus back to Europe, as she described the Parliament as part of the wider European enterprise of inventing world religions and pluralism.<sup>13</sup> Mishka Sinha, though not directly engaging with the Parliament, has recently highlighted the trajectory that American Orientalism took in the late nineteenth century, distinct from its European counterpart.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, dominant voices across the Atlantic Ocean have marked the Parliament as an important juncture in the history of religious studies *as a discipline*. Certainly, at University of Chicago and at Harvard University, the immediate outcome of the Parliament was the creation of new positions and lectureships. In April of 1894, Caroline E. Haskell, a member of John Henry Barrow's congregation, donated \$20,000 to the University of Chicago to establish the Haskell Lectureship on Comparative Religion, and \$100,000 for the Haskell Oriental Museum.<sup>15</sup> On the East Coast, the new collaborative spirit between a leading scholar of Eastern religions, Paul Carus, and a Japanese delegate, Shaku Soyen, resulted in the propagation of Zen Buddhism in America.<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, amongst the scholars of 'area studies', particularly Asian Studies, the Parliament has stimulated debates both around the political capital its international exposure generated, and the domineering umbrella of Christian imperialism that its hosts attempted to maintain. John S. Harding and James Ketelaar have both investigated the ways Japanese delegates used the Parliament to carry out cultural diplomacy.<sup>17</sup> While highlighting the East

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Hughes Seager, (ed.), *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing, 1993), xiii-11.

<sup>13</sup> Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); also see Dorothea Lüddeckens, *Das Weltparlament der Religionen von 1893: Strukturen interreligiöser Begegnung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: de Gruyter 2002), Justin Nordstrom, 'Utopians at the Parliament: The World's Parliament of Religions and the Columbian Exposition of 1893', *Journal of Religious History* 33: 3 (2009), 348–365.

<sup>14</sup> Mishka Sinha, 'Orienting America: Sanskrit and Modern Scholarship in the United States, 1836-1894', in *Debating Orientalism*, eds. Anna Bernard, Ziad El-Marsafy, and David Atwell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 73-93.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Eleanor Barrows, *John Henry Barrows: A Memoir* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904), 300.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Carus, *The Dawn of the New Era and Other Essays* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1899). Dharmapala also participated in this new movement. On Dharmapala, see Steven Kemper, *Rescued from the Nation: Angarika Dharmapala and the Buddhist World* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> John S. Harding, *Mahayana Phoenix: Japan's Buddhists at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions* (New York; Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008); James E. Ketelaar, 'The Reconvening of Babel: Eastern Buddhism and the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions', in *A Museum of Faiths: Histories and Legacies of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions*, ed. Eric J. Ziolkowski (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 251-303.

Asian delegates' deviation from the Parliament's organisers' instructions, Ketelaar has asserted that their voice was ultimately subdued by overarching Christian intentions and interpretations.<sup>18</sup> Analysing 'religion-as-discourse', John Zavos has drawn similar conclusions about the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions.<sup>19</sup> Taking on Talal Asad's framework of 'languages and projects' producing 'specific forms of power and subjection', Zavos has pointed out the inherently American nature of the 1893 and 2004 Parliaments, and the continued dominance of a specific model of 'World Religion' at both events.<sup>20</sup> According to Zavos, if the organisers of the 1893 Parliament played down the messages of non-Christian delegates to suit the Christian vision of 'World Religions', the 2004 event aimed to distinguish 'World Religion' from the violent forms of religious fundamentalism.<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly, in this history of Asian participation at the Parliament, Vivekananda remains absent. Contrary to the lack of scholarship devoted solely to examining Vivekananda at the Parliament, in popular discourse his impact at the event has survived spatial and temporal constraints; Vivekananda is frequently taken out of the spiritual domain of his monastery, and moulded into an important cultural and political icon. Immediately after the Parliament, copies of his speeches reached the remotest corners of America and India.<sup>22</sup> In the early twentieth century, Hindi journals framed him as a national figure, by repeatedly invoking his performance. One remarked that through the Parliament he 'raised the head of India amongst other countries!' and included him in the list of *mahapurush* (great men), along with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.<sup>23</sup>

The relative political weight given to the Parliament by scholars of Asia as compared to its comparatively inconspicuous imprint in American national history raises important questions. Was the Parliament a 'liberal, western, and American quest for world religious unity that failed', as John P. Burris has argued?<sup>24</sup> Was its imagined landscape of universal brotherhood merely a reflection of a new world order led by American Christianity? Or was it

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<sup>18</sup> Ketelaar, 'The Reconvening of Babel', 271-272.

<sup>19</sup> John Zavos, 'Dialogues on Religion and Violence at the Parliament of the World's Religions', in *Religion, Language, and Power*, eds. Nile Green and Mary Searle-Chatterjee (New York: Routledge, 2008), 27-41.

<sup>20</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 13 cited in Zavos, 'Dialogues on Religion and Violence', 32.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> The pamphlets produced by G.A. Natesan, for example, reached both Britain and America. Barrows' and Jones' pamphlets were also widely circulated.

<sup>23</sup> Tanasuravram Gupta, *Bhāratīya Mahāpurūsh*, Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi, India.

<sup>24</sup> John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions, 1851-1893* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2001), xxviii.

the start of East-West collaboration on new terms, and did it lay the foundations for a Pan-Asian network?<sup>25</sup>

While answers to these questions largely depend on the regional perspective one takes, what is striking is the multiplicity of geography and spatial units in which the Parliament is evoked. If the international stage gave non-Christian delegates some autonomous voice, and concomitantly, political capital, as Henry Em, Ketelaar and Harding have demonstrated, the Parliament's location, intention, and language of communication also inherently imposed a Christian imperial mould as suggested by Burriss and Zavos.<sup>26</sup> While these scholars have analysed the Parliament from a specific regional perspective, others have engaged with the Parliament as a moment in Asian history. Prasenjit Duara, in his interesting study on the discourse of civilisation, has pointed to the 1893 Parliament as a public event that catalysed Asian religions' transformation into 'world religion', and thus, 'civilisation'.<sup>27</sup> But even as he examines the symbiotic relationship between universalism and nationalism, he ultimately concludes that 'civilisation both opposes the Civilization of imperialists, but also depends on it'.<sup>28</sup> Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné, in their survey of Asianism, have presented the Parliament as 'a space for encounters and communications between Asian actors', which would eventually congeal into 'future transnational cooperation'.<sup>29</sup>

While remaining insightful, these histories do not speak to each other. They paint different sides of the Parliament, yet fail to bring it to life as a peculiar event of the fin-de-siècle. This chapter uses various spatial frameworks to dissect the layers of spatial affiliations that the Parliament brought into being. In doing so, the chapter will uncover the many discourses and affiliations that Vivekananda navigated to earn his international celebrity.

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<sup>25</sup> See the introduction of Chapter 2; and Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905-1940)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54: 1 (2012), 65–92.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Em, *Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Duara, 'The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism', 102. Duara mostly focuses on East Asia and the First World War in this piece.

<sup>28</sup> Id., 107.

<sup>29</sup> Stolte and Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India', 69.



## Representation at the Parliament of the World's Religions

International events came into vogue in the latter half of the nineteenth century. From international meetings and congresses of social organisations to international expositions, the nineteenth century created various moments and pockets of 'contractive globality'.<sup>30</sup> Unlike its dispersive counterpart marked by expansion in time and space, 'contractive globality' draws the world into a single location, transforming the occasion 'international' by its diverse composition in a confined space. Diversity, however, did not signify equality. Rather, these cosmopolitan spaces harbouring representations of reality had to be ordered according to the vision of the host and its will to hegemonic power. Timothy Mitchell argues that such ordered representations of the world, or seeing the world-as-exhibition, was inherently colonial.<sup>31</sup>

In his seminal monograph, *Colonizing Egypt*, Mitchell designates representation and meaning as two pivotal mechanisms underpinning the 'colonial world'.<sup>32</sup> By 'colonial world' he does not mean the localities of colonies or the metropole, but the structured ways of viewing and engaging with the world as if it were an exhibition. In this paradigm, the world appears as an ordered representation of meaning, like the selected objects on display in exhibitions.

The International Congress of Orientalists was one such nineteenth century event. Initiated in 1873 to strengthen European Oriental scholarship, the International Congress of Orientalists provided such 'contractive spaces' of knowledge and people. These scholarly meetings invited experts from outside western Europe. America, Japan, India, and Russia sent some of the few non-European participants. As events with the primary aim of deepening European collaboration in the field of Oriental Studies, the early congresses were largely composed of European scholars, and only a few selected Indian delegates participated in their shadow. At the Second International Congress of Orientalists held in London in 1874, Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner took on the title 'Leitner of Lahore', rather than 'Leitner of London'. Similarly, at the Twelfth International Congress of Orientalists held in Rome in 1899, affiliated members

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<sup>30</sup> For more on this concept, see Sophie-Jung Kim. 'An International Event and Its Multiple Global Publics: The Parliament of the World's Religions (Chicago, 1893), Vivekananda, and New Belonging', in *Global Public: Its Power and Its Limits*, ed. Valeska Huber and Jürgen Osterhammel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>31</sup> See Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*; also see Chapter 2 and 4 of this thesis.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 13-21. For more on this concept, see Timothy Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,' in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), 289-317, particularly, p. 290. For the concept of 'colonial world' also see, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 1965).

and leaders of the Muslim University of Calcutta and the Asiatic Society, Sir Raymond West, Sir Charles Lyall, and Augustus Rudolf Hoernie, represented ‘Indian knowledge’, with only two ‘native’ attendees at their side. As Mitchell has shown, Egyptian participants, whose presence was often described as ‘mischievous and degrading’, were regarded as a ‘collection of *Orientalists*, not of *Orientalists*’.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in these early gatherings, the breadth of foreign knowledge possessed by European scholars, rather than by the diverse composition of their participants, defined the ‘international’ geography of the event.

Such mapping of the world had a specific purpose. Wrapped in the idioms of humanity and world peace, these meetings perpetuated the imperial discourse of ‘civilising mission’.<sup>34</sup> Lord Mayor, who chaired the Second International Congress of Orientalists in 1874, described the event as a project of spreading peace: ‘this learned body tries not to bring about confusion but harmony among the peoples of the world. They try to learn and teach us what has been in the past, particularly in that interesting quarter of the globe called the East.’<sup>35</sup> According to him, world harmony could be obtained through the perfection of Oriental knowledge in London, a feat that could be achieved only in the benign operation of the British Empire. At the Twelfth International Congress of Orientalists in 1899, Umberto I of Italy described the East as ‘isolated from humankind, [having] closed their doors to progress, [had] thus seal[ed] their fate to eternal stagnation’.<sup>36</sup> He insisted that this conundrum could only be resolved by the scholarly intervention of European experts.<sup>37</sup> Often, topics of discussion also directly addressed the concerns of governing colonies. Some of the questions raised at these early congresses included how to better educate Indian civil servants through Oriental Studies, and the sensitive question of ‘what relations should be cultivated between Orientalists and native Oriental scholars in the East.’<sup>38</sup>

In these ways, the early International Congress of Orientalists largely followed Mitchell’s paradigm. European scholars curated specific representations of Oriental religions with carefully selected ‘native’ representatives attending the congress to demonstrate a specific

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<sup>33</sup> R. N. Crust, ‘The International Congresses of Orientalists’, *Hellas* 6 (1897), 351. Cited in Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 2. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>34</sup> For a critical engagement with ‘civilizing mission’, see Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann, (eds.), *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> ‘The International Congress of Orientalists’, *The Observer*, 20 Sep 1874, 6.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Proceedings (Extract) of XII International Congress of Orientalists, Rome, October 1899’, *The International Dunhuang Project* <http://idp.bl.uk/4DCGI/education/orientalists/index.a4d>. (accessed 10 January 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> ‘The Ninth International Congress of Orientalists’, *T’oung Pao*, 1:5 (1891), 406-411.

ritual, or to stand as supplementary companions to their European counterparts.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, even westernised ‘native’ representatives could not define or control their identity. Filipa Lowndes Vincente offers one fascinating example of failed self-fashioning by a ‘native’ Oriental scholar in her book, *Other Orientalisms*. Jose Gerson da Cunha, a Catholic born in Goa, attended the Fourth International Congress of Orientalists (Florence, 1878) as the only Indian participant. Despite his religious affiliation, da Cunha was often portrayed as a ‘Brahman’, an identity he abhorred due to its popular association with the label, ‘heathen’.<sup>40</sup> Through the example of da Cunha, Vincente shows how ‘his Indian-ness was reinforced, while the elements of his European identity, his Goan culture, his mother tongue, his Catholic religion and education became almost invisible.’<sup>41</sup> Da Cunha, then, did not wield much influence on how he was represented. This externally-imposed ‘nativeness’ concomitantly forced da Cunha to develop an aversion to being recognised solely by his racial identity. In contrast, as Chapter 2 has shown, at the Parliament both the organisers and the non-Christian participants prized the latter’s ethnic ‘authenticity’.

In a way, world religion came to life only when coupled with ‘native authenticity’. Religion as a theme appeared in various parts of the Columbian Exposition and Congress Auxiliary. The U.S. Government Building hosted a section on ‘Religious Ceremonials’, and the Congress of Philologists and Anthropology both dealt with subjects related to specific religions.<sup>42</sup> Despite this, ‘religion’ only really came to life at the Parliament. The Parliament not only exhibited ‘ethnic’ religious practitioners, but it also provided a stage on which non-Christian representatives spoke without any interruption for the first time. Added to this celebration of diversity, the Parliament embraced the language of fin-de-siècle utopianism, which Leela Gandhi defines as a conscious ‘departure from inherited communities’ and a move toward ‘an other-directed ethics and politics’.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, despite its conspicuously Christian characterisation of ‘religion’, the Parliament in its discourses also charted a utopian religious fraternity.

This, at times, transformed the event into a quasi-diplomatic forum. The Organising Committee’s Preliminary Address illustrates this transition quite clearly. With a strong sense

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<sup>39</sup> Examples cited in Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Filipa Lowndes Vincente, *Other Orientalisms: India Between Florence and Bombay, 1860-1900* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012), 4.

<sup>41</sup> Id., 6.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed list of congresses and papers see Chapter 5 in Burris, *Exhibiting Religion*, particularly p. 142-3.

<sup>43</sup> Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, 7.

of moral purpose, and an emphasis on the responsibility of world governance, the address explained the Parliament's aims thus:

to bring together in conference, for the first time in history, the leading representatives of the great Historic religions of the world; To set forth, for permanent record to be published to the world, an accurate and authoritative account of the present condition and outlook of Religion among the leading nations of the earth; To discover, from competent men, what light Religion has to throw on the great problems of the present age, especially the important questions connected with Temperance, Labor, Education, Wealth and Poverty; To bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly fellowship, in the hope of securing permanent international peace.<sup>44</sup>

Religion was thus not only to address social issues, but also to settle disputes amongst nations through the force of brotherhood and friendship. While the ten world religions correlated to 'the leading nations', it was the nature of 'a friendly conference of eminent men, strong in their personal convictions' that could secure 'permanent international peace'.<sup>45</sup> By focusing on the contribution of religion 'to the great problems of the time' and by binding religious leaders into a supra-national community, 'religion' thus offered an alternative to politics that rhetorically transcended national and regional distinctions.<sup>46</sup>

Such claims to utopian religious fraternity attracted global attention. A cascade of letters of congratulation flowed in from the leaders of non-Christian religions. The prominent jurist and one of the founding figures of the All India Muslim League, Sayyid Amir Ali, endorsed the Parliament as 'marking an epoch in the history of religious development', while others such as Reuchi Shibata of Japan saw it as a step towards international peace.<sup>47</sup> The Ceylonese Buddhist Angarika Dharmapala applauded Barrows as 'the American Asoka', and the Brahmo Samajist, B.B. Nagarkar, referred to the Parliament as the first step 'toward the establishment of universal peace and good-will among men and nations of the world'.<sup>48</sup> Even in conveying local news, the Parliament became an appealing reference point. One article in the *Times of India* even contrasted the Calicut Moplah uprising of 1894 with the universal brotherhood advocated at the Parliament.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The list goes on. See, Barrows, *The World's Parliament*, vol.1, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Id., 10.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Seager (eds.) *The Dawn*, 247.

<sup>48</sup> Jones, *A Chorus*, 54, 76.

<sup>49</sup> See the comparison drawn in 'The Moplah Outbreak', *The Times of India*, 10 Apr 1894, 6.

Therefore, despite being a nineteenth century international event occurring in the ‘West’, the Parliament of the World’s Religions was very different from previous international events of its kind. In its romantic view of the impact of world religion in securing international peace, its emphasis on the ‘authentic’ representation of world religions and the creation of a utopian religious fraternity, the Parliament offered a novel political stage to its participants. For the first time, ‘Oriental’ delegates could expound on their ideas without being interrupted or dominated, and could paint their own landscape of fraternity.

One specific vision of brotherhood emerged at the event. As the ensuing section will illustrate, the rhetorical mechanics of the chairman, John Henry Barrows, and the Indian delegates created a shared discourse anchored in strategic intimacy against a shared enemy. Here, the language of religion took off its spiritual raiments, and donned an explicitly political garb.

### **The Politics of Hospitality and Universal Brotherhood**

In their genealogy of Asianism, Stolte and Fischer-Tiné position the Parliament in interesting ways. First, placing it under the heading ‘Early Asianism: The Unity of Asian Civilisation’, they describe the event as an ‘important platform for the global promulgation of East-West stereotypes’.<sup>50</sup> Although the concerted development of Pan-Asianist ideas would only follow decades later, it was on this stage, they suggest, that Asian religious leaders came into contact. Then, as the authors progress into twentieth century international events, they evoke the Parliament once more. This time, they draw a comparison to ‘the World Congress of Oppressed Peoples’ (Brussels, 1927). Juxtaposing the religious gathering to this conspicuously political meeting, the authors highlight the international nexus that the Parliament generated. They write, ‘like the World Parliament of Religions thirty-five years before, the Congress offered a platform for the creation of international contacts. This time, however, the participants were not religious dignitaries but political leaders who mingled and forged alliances.’<sup>51</sup> The pivotal difference between the two events that the authors draw seem to be that one was led by religious figures and the other by politicians. Given the fact that the Parliament did not directly produce

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<sup>50</sup> Stolte and Fischer-Tiné, ‘Imagining Asia in India’, 69.

<sup>51</sup> Id., 74.

Pan-Asian collaboration, the Parliament, in their history, is reduced to a foreshadowing of an anti-Western regionalism to follow.

While their work is important in placing the Parliament within a larger history of internationalism, their rendering of the event is slightly, but crucially, misleading. First, their emphatic distinction of the Parliament as an international gathering of religious dignitaries assumes that religion was sharply distinct from politics. It does not allow for the possibility that the Parliament produced a new supra-national political geography, one that was not simply a passing encounter. Stolte and Fischer-Tiné also suggest that the Asian delegates ‘subscribe[d] to the binary East-West cliché’.<sup>52</sup> However, the Asian speakers did not merely adopt ‘the usual cliché’, but deployed it for specific political purposes.

From the outset, Asian delegates used the Parliament as a megaphone to convey explicitly political messages. In his closing remark, Kwang Pang Yu, who spoke on Taoism and Confucianism, pleaded with the audience to extend the kindness shown to him to the Chinese immigrants in America. Japanese representatives, as argued by John S. Harding, used the Parliament as a cultural diplomatic event, and called for political alliances in the rising tension between Japan and its neighbours.<sup>53</sup> One Japanese Buddhist, Hirai Kinzo, sharpened his criticisms of Christian nations, addressing a variety of social injustices in America from racial discrimination, unfavourable legal treaties, seal fishery to suffrage in Hawaii.<sup>54</sup> Particularly in his speech on ‘The Attitude of Japan toward Christianity’, he raised his concern for Christianity in the context of international justice. He questioned:

is it Christian morality to trample upon the rights and advantages of a non-Christian nation, colouring all their natural happiness with the dark stain of injustice? ... We, the forty million souls of Japan, standing firmly and persistently upon the basis of international justice, await still further manifestations as to the morality of Christianity.<sup>55</sup>

While the Asian religious figures used the stage to address political issues, their national problems preceded the needs of creating an anti-Western Asian geography. This led the Indian delegates to invoke American exceptionalism in their speeches. As this chapter will show, the Parliament, in its rhetoric of hospitality produced a strategic brotherhood between Indian

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<sup>52</sup> Id., 69.

<sup>53</sup> See Harding, *Mahayana Phoenix*.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, *A Chorus*, 134.

<sup>55</sup> Id., 135.

delegates and the event's chairman, John Henry Barrows. This parochial geography against a specific 'West' leads to my second argument against Stolte and Fischer-Tiné.

These scholars' inclusion of the Parliament into Pan-Asianism, which they define as a distinctly anti-Western and anti-imperial world order, brushes over the minute yet acute rifts between the Asian delegates.<sup>56</sup> Asian delegates, while sharing the discourse of Eastern spiritual superiority over western materialism, were not full of appreciation for each other. In fact, they were not particularly interested in forging a community. Yun Chi Ho, the Korean delegate to the Exposition who sat in the audience, was full of criticism of the Indian delegates.<sup>57</sup> Confusing Virchand Gandhi with Vivekananda, Yun criticised Vivekananda for the statements made by Gandhi. Vivekananda also displayed indifference to Eastern representatives. Although he delivered a message of mutual dependency of Hinduism and Buddhism, it was not until his last years that he began to take interest in collaborating with Japanese Buddhists.<sup>58</sup> Even then, Vivekananda's Eastern friends were *not* the delegates from the Parliament, but belonged to a circle of idealists around Rabindranath Tagore.<sup>59</sup> The delegates' post-Parliament experience also led them in different directions. The Buddhist representatives collaborated with the idealist philosopher Paul Carus, while Vivekananda launched a series of social gathering with a wealthy transatlantic audience. Therefore, the Asian delegates' encounters at the Parliament did not necessarily reflect a desire for future collaboration, and should not be understood to have carried significant implications for what was to follow few decades later.

Undoubtedly, the Parliament provides an important point in the history of internationalism as well as Pan-Asianism. However, this is not because it offered a meeting point amongst non-western figures, but because it produced distinct geographies of brotherhood. Indeed, contrary to James Ketelaar's argument that Asian delegates remained mere exotics or weaker Other, Indian representatives became the chosen receivers of American hospitality and put up a concerted effort to strengthen Indo-American ties. We will now turn to examine this particular geography of Indo-American brotherhood.

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<sup>56</sup> Stolte and Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India', 92.

<sup>57</sup> See Henry Em, *Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2013), 57 fn 26.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> See Kemper, *Rescued from the Nation*, 227-231.

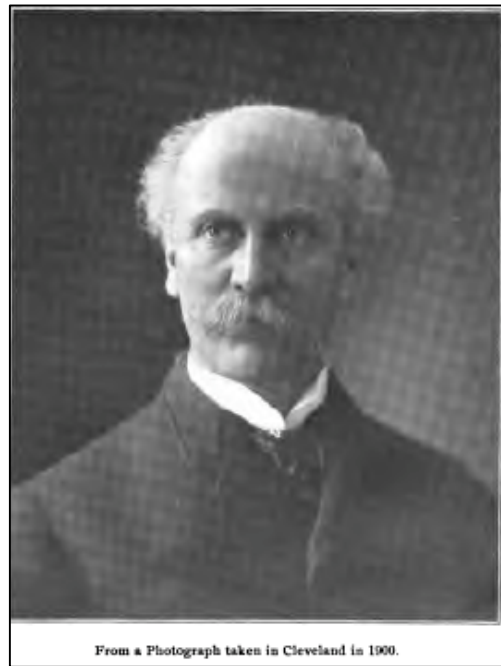


Image 11. John Henry Barrows.<sup>60</sup>

John Henry Barrows (1847-1902) was a Presbyterian minister who had gained an ‘enviable reputation’ by 1880, when he first moved to Chicago from Massachusetts.<sup>61</sup> A popular orator, Barrows did not confine himself to the spiritual realm. He saw the division between politics and religious life as arbitrary, and encouraged men ‘boldly...[to] enter [politics and all other non-religious spheres] and claim them for God’.<sup>62</sup> He was an active speaker at the Citizens’ and the Law and Order Leagues and the National Republican Convention. In his speeches, he emphasised the application of Christian principles to political affairs, and argued that being ‘true to God’ sometimes led one to ‘preach truths that have immediate political bearings’.<sup>63</sup> The titles of his speeches, such as, ‘America for Christ’, ‘The Religious Possibilities of the World’s Fair’, ‘The Brotherhood of Nations’, and ‘The Conquest of the World’, illustrate his tendency to politicise religion.

Barrows’ service to politics began with ‘municipal patriotism’. His speeches from 1888 to 1901 exude multiple local allegiances. In a thanksgiving sermon in 1890, he promoted municipal patriotism as the ‘civic virtue more urgently demanded in American life’ than

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<sup>60</sup> From Barrows, *John Henry Barrows*, unnumbered page.

<sup>61</sup> Walter Raleigh Houghton (ed.), *Neely’s History of the Parliament of Religions and Religious Congresses of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, (Chicago: Frank Tennyson Neely, 1894), vol. 2, 972.

<sup>62</sup> Barrows, *John Henry Barrows*, 241.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*



anything else.<sup>64</sup> Chicago had already passed the stage of ‘a mere commercial capital’, and had become a metropolis, ‘one of the chief cities of our globe’ that carried ‘all the tremendous responsibilities’.<sup>65</sup> Pivoting on the individual as the key motor driving social and national change, he focused on ‘train[ing] ideal citizens, men who voluntarily sacrifice personal and party interests for the city’ rather than becoming consumed by materialism as witnessed in the ‘awful brutality and misery depicted in “Darkest England”’.<sup>66</sup> In his mind, municipal patriotism required both a national and global consciousness, anchored in anti-materialism.

Barrows saw Christianity and America as the ultimate counterweight to the materialism that threatened to plague the world. As such, the Parliament presented an important international platform both to spread and cement Christianity within America and abroad, and to secure America’s rising prominence in the world order. As his daughter, Marry Barrows, wrote, while the organisers acknowledged that similar gatherings and dialogue between diverse religions had occurred in India during the reign of Ashoka and Akbar, Barrows saw himself and his co-organisers as ‘the first men of the Christian era to bring it to fruition’.<sup>67</sup> Equally important to Barrows, this ‘Christian era’ was led by America. This entwined pride in his religion and country appeared frequently in his speeches, and in the ways he interpreted the positive feedback from Christian denominations. He held the approval of the Irish Catholic Church as the evidence that even the Catholic Church was ‘led by American citizens with American ideas’.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the Parliament, from inception to afterlife, was to hold up as ‘proof’ of America’s leadership of Christianity, and indeed of the world, through its creation of universal brotherhood.

While one could conclude that Barrows’ pride in his religion and his country indicated the Christian imperialist motivations behind the Parliament, a closer examination of his ideas reveals the very specific geography of universal brotherhood that he envisioned. Barrows knitted the language of brotherhood together with that of intimacy and hospitality with a specific designated giver and recipient — America and India.

In all his writings, Barrows repeatedly stressed his bond with the Indian delegates. Regarding the Brahmo Samajist, P.C. Majumdar, he wrote that he could see through the outer differences of race and religion. He confessed, ‘in Mr. Mozoomdar I have found one of the

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<sup>64</sup> Id., 237.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Id., 244.

<sup>67</sup> Id., 254.

<sup>68</sup> Id., 257.

deepest and richest souls'.<sup>69</sup> He suggested that this intimacy superseded the bond of blood; as he put it, 'I am not acquainted with any English or American divine who seems to me to live so much in the world of spirit.'<sup>70</sup> Given that at times Barrows used derogatory adjectives (for instance, 'rotund, big-headed, and ever-smiling', to describe the Chinese representative Kwang Pung Yu), his drawing of an intimate bond between himself and Majumdar shows his conscious attempt at masking his private beliefs about racial hierarchy.<sup>71</sup>

His gesture of friendship was greeted with warm replies. Majumdar returned the compliment by describing Barrows as a 'leading missionary', and Nagarkar, in classical Brahmo fashion, emphasised the harmonisation of religions by professing that world religions 'all form a homogeneous whole'.<sup>72</sup> The woman Parsee delegate, Jeanne Sorabji, expressed the feeling of being at home in the foreign country, for 'seeing [American's] kindly faces ha[d] turned away the heartache' of being in a land of strangers.<sup>73</sup>

Sorabji's comment on 'feeling at home' in a strange country was exactly the strength of America that Barrows sought to emphasise to the world. Indeed, Barrows publicly credited the Parliament's success to American hospitality. Citing the words of the Asian delegates, he wrote:

The Orientals attending the Parliament were deeply impressed by the fraternity and Christian love which invited them, furnished them hospitality, gave them a free platform, and welcomed their sharpest criticisms of Christendom. The eloquent Buddhist, Mr. Hirai, on leaving for Japan, said to me: "I go back a Christian, by which I mean that Christianity is a religion which I shall be glad to see established in Japan. Only let the Christian missionaries not interfere with our national usages and patriotic holidays. I expected that before I finished my address, criticising false Christianity in Japan, I should be torn from the platform. But I was received with enthusiasm."... Mr Gandhi, the critic of Christian missions, said: "American Christianity I like; it is something better than what we have usually seen in India."<sup>74</sup>

In Barrows' view, American hospitality distinguished American Christianity from others. It was this national trait of generosity that nudged Oriental delegates to accept some aspects of the Christian faith. Hirai no longer opposed Christian missionaries in Japan, and Gandhi

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<sup>69</sup> Id., 283.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Id., 285.

<sup>72</sup> Jones, *A Chorus*, 54.

<sup>73</sup> Id., 74, 75, 60.

<sup>74</sup> Barrows, *John Henry Barrows*, 281.

declared the superiority of American Christianity over that of Britain. By citing the remarks of Asian delegates, Barrows sought to prove that American hospitality and faith could usher in universal brotherhood. Therefore, he saw hospitality not only as a humane gesture in the cosmopolitan spirit, but as a means of establishing a hierarchy between different Christian nations.

Indeed, he revealed the purpose behind his idea on hospitality in his rebuttal of the widely-circulated narrative of an Asian triumph over America. Describing the story as one of few ‘evil results’ of the Parliament, Barrows wrote:

The Parliament also gave occasion for some foolish and unfounded reports in heathendom. A few of the returning delegates, gravely informed the Oriental world that America was getting tired of Christianity and looked upon Buddhism or Hinduism as better. Such misinterpretations of the courtesy extended to them in America and our generous tolerance were to be expected. But, like other mistakes, they have been for the most part corrected.<sup>75</sup>

In Barrow’s mind, the ‘courtesy’ of American ‘generous tolerance’ had to be received in only one way — by acknowledging Christian superiority, and by strengthening America’s religious borders. The Asian delegates had simply mistaken American generosity as their ‘victory’.

He endeavoured to correct these notions in a series of lectures delivered in India and Japan between 1896 and 1897. Barrows argued that the Parliament’s universalism did not imply ‘the false theory that all religions are equally good’, but symbolised ‘the spirit of Christian courtesy’ in America.<sup>76</sup> The success enjoyed by Asian delegates simply reflected the courtesy and curiosity of the American people. He continued, ‘I believe that America will always be hospitable to persons and to ideas. But to affirm that American Christianity has been shaken by the Eastern speakers at the Parliament of Religions is as absurdly incredible to everyone who knows, as to say that a child’s hand has pushed back the current of the Ganges.’<sup>77</sup> The analogy is telling: Barrows wanted the non-Christian participants to remain passive recipients of American hospitality, forever remaining childlike in the face of the national prowess of America.

Barrows’ insistence on this structured hierarchy between the host and the visitor, his analogy to the Ganges, and the location of his speech indicate that he had a specific target,

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<sup>75</sup> Id., 298.

<sup>76</sup> John Henry Barrows, *Christianity, The World-Religion: Lectures Delivered in India and Japan* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1897), 316.

<sup>77</sup> Id., 294-295.

Britain. The Parliament's projection of the creation of a community of great men who shared the same goal of 'unit[ing] all religions against all irreligion' disguised an anti-imperialist sentiment rising among the American public.<sup>78</sup> Barrows confessed after the event that the supporters of the Parliament 'called attention to the fact that Europe's Eastern questions, that Asiatic aggrandizement and African colonization, had brought together rival nations and rival races to divide the spoils of war'.<sup>79</sup> This made the Parliament an urgent event to be led by the followers of 'the spirit of the Prince of Peace ... to bring men together in a wider brotherhood than had been achieved by diplomacy, commerce or national selfishness'.<sup>80</sup> This clear juxtaposition between European imperialism and America as an international moral referee gathered force towards the end of the event. Directing the same message to the Oriental delegates, Barrows made the following statement on the last day of the Parliament:

I am glad that you will go back to India, to Japan, to China, and the Turkish empire and tell the men of other faiths that Christian America is hospitable to all truth and loving to all men. Yes, tell the men of the Orient that we have no sympathy with the abominations which falsely-named Christians have practiced.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, Barrows rendered the Christian American hospitality and the concomitant intimacy shared with non-Christian delegates as the beginning of an 'international peace' led by Christian America.<sup>82</sup>

Indian representatives joined Barrows in his anti-British calls. While East Asian delegates voiced issues concerning America and Christianity more broadly, Indian participants spoke for justice in the British Empire. Some, like Naasimhacharya, a Visishtadvaitin from Madras, challenged the validity of the civilising mission, a widely-used justification for imperial expansion and colonisation. He exposed the reality of the concept as he exclaimed, 'the goddess of civilisation with a bottle of rum in her hand' had made India 'drunkards and brutes!'.<sup>83</sup> Others highlighted the cost of colonialism for the colonised. Vivekananda explained that England, 'the richest Christian nation in the world', accumulated its wealth by stamping its 'foot upon the neck of 250,000,000 Asiatics', and concluded that 'Christianity has

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<sup>78</sup> Seager, *The World's Parliament*, 82-83.

<sup>79</sup> Barrows, *The World's Parliament*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Barrows, *Christianity, The World-Religion*, 279.

<sup>82</sup> Barrows, *John Henry Barrows*, 281.

<sup>83</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *World Parliament of Religions*, 16.

conquered prosperity with blood and with the sword'.<sup>84</sup> Nagarkar supported Vivekananda's examples. Addressing the American audience, he declared, 'the transfer of power into the hands of your English cousins has cost us a most heavy and crushing price... [It] took away our liberty. It deprived us and has been ever since depriving us of some of our noblest places of ancient art and antiquity.'<sup>85</sup>

Having laid bare the cruelty of colonialism, some delegates even foretold the imminent independence of India. Questioning the colonial state's right to govern, Nagarkar asked, 'how much can you expect from government, especially when that government is a foreign one, and therefore has always to think of maintaining itself and keeping its prestige among foreign people?'. He predicted that 'in politics and in national government it is now an established fact that in future ... every country will be governed by itself as an independent unit ... what is true in politics will also be true in religion'.<sup>86</sup> Another Barhmo Samajist, Majumdar, also prophesised the same glorious future for India, as he claimed, 'behold the aspirations of modern India — intellectual, social, political — all awakened; our religious instincts stirred to the roots.'<sup>87</sup>

In this narrative of India's inevitable freedom, America and Americans played a central role. Vivekananda distinguished America as a western power whose dedication to moral values outshone those of Britain. His first speech was immersed in the language of manifest destiny. He spoke:

It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion. ... Hail, Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbour's blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one's neighbours, it has been given to thee to march at the vanguard of civilization with the flag of harmony.<sup>88</sup>

Through this comparison with the British Empire, which had been developed by other prominent Indians such as Dadabhai Naorjji, Vivekananda delivered a message targeted

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Jones, *A Chorus*, 75.

<sup>86</sup> Seager, *The Dawn*, 339, 437.

<sup>87</sup> Jones, *A Chorus*, 40.

<sup>88</sup> Id., 281.

specifically at the American public.<sup>89</sup> Nagarkar also drew the same connection between America's colonial history to that of India's present condition and called for support. He urged:

In the name of that liberty of thought and action for the sake of which your noble forefathers forsook their ancestral homes in far off Europe, in the name of that equality of peace and position which you so much prize and which you so nobly exemplify in all your social and national institutions, I entreat you, my beloved American brothers and sisters, to grant us your blessings and good wishes, to give us your earnest advice and active cooperation in the realization of the social, political, and religious aspirations of young India... God has given you a mission.<sup>90</sup>

Both Vivekananda and Nagarkar thus artfully appealed to the sentiment of American exceptionalism embedded in Barrows' own language of hospitality and in the organisers' language of international justice and peace. Furthermore, in contrast to the British rule of 'blood and the sword', Vivekananda argued that the only law cherished in Hinduism was that of love, echoing the similar humane values of Christian hospitality propagated by Barrows.

If, as Zavos suggests, the threat of violence stimulates inter-religious dialogue in an attempt at subduing a mutual Other, through the language of American hospitality, the Indian delegates bonded with Barrows to denounce the British as their common enemy. Indeed, accepting American hospitality allowed Indian delegates to forge a facile intimacy that aligned them with another strong western nation. This new geography of fraternity, quite deliberately, left no room for either Britain or 'Asia'.

While the politics of hospitality created a new discursive connection between the delegates, it did not manifest in real, more tangible, brotherhood. In fact, the discursive space of universal brotherhood belied the problem of representation, which, immediately after the event, revealed the parochial interests of the organisers and delegates. As the analysis of the event's aftermath will show, the Indian delegates' seemingly united voice against Britain quickly fell apart.

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<sup>89</sup> John McLane, 'The Drain of Wealth and Indian Nationalism at the Turn of the Century' in *India and the World Economy, 1850-1950*, ed. G. Balachandran (Delhi: OUP, 2003), 70-92.

<sup>90</sup> Jones, *A Chorus*, 272.

## One Voice, Disparate Allegiances: The Problem of Representation

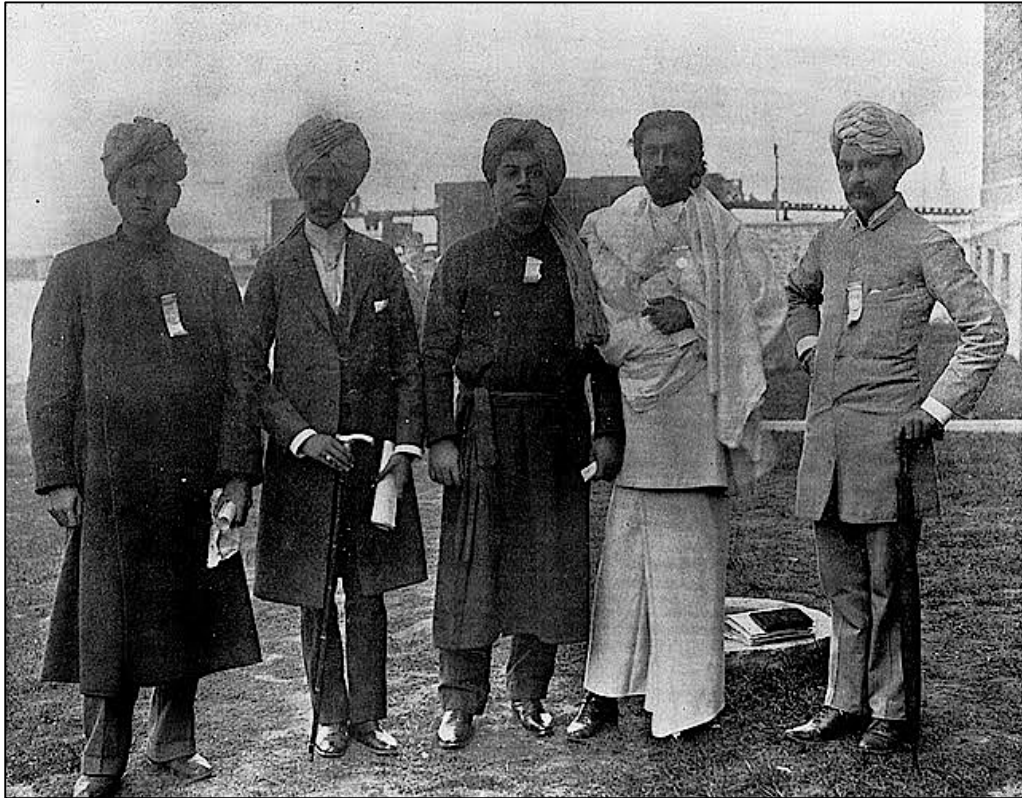


Image 12. Indian delegates at the Parliament.<sup>91</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Indian delegates with institutional support enjoyed many privileges at the Parliament. Those affiliated with the Brahmo Samaj and the Theosophical Society served in the Advisory Council, received public acknowledgements months before the start of the Parliament, and gained the most press coverage. As Rajagopal Chattopadhyaya has demonstrated in his study of American newspapers' reports on India's representatives, the press covered Dharmapala, affiliated with the Theosophical Society, and Majumdar, associated with the Brahmo Samaj, far more than Vivekananda throughout the event.<sup>92</sup>

Interestingly, despite introducing Majumdar as a 'Hindu', most newspapers reporting on the opening date of the Parliament did not engage with 'Hinduism' as such. A front-page article in the *Washington Post* on 11 September 1893 listed Buddhism, Judaism, and Confucianism as the three non-Christian religions represented.<sup>93</sup> Even in more extensive

<sup>91</sup> 'Parliament History Sets Stage for Future Interfaith', 17 June 2014, *Parliament of the World's Religions* <https://parliamentofreligions.org/content/parliament-history-sets-stage-future-interfaith-pictures> (accessed, 10 December 2014).

<sup>92</sup> Chattopadhyaya, *World's Parliament of Religions*, 137.

<sup>93</sup> 'Congress of Religions in the Art Palace at the Fair', *The Washington Post*, 11 September 1893, 1.

coverage of the world religions, ‘Hinduism’ remained absent from the list, being replaced by ‘Brahminism’ followed by ‘Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Theosophy’.<sup>94</sup> The same article only introduced those affiliated with existing institutions, such as Chakravarti and Dharmapala (both of the Theosophical Society), and Majumdar (of the Brahmo Samaj), as the Parliament’s Indian delegates.<sup>95</sup> John Henry Barrows often took a step further and presented the delegates by their institutions rather than by their faiths, as his statement, ‘the imperial government of China, the Buddhist Church of Southern India, the Brahmo-Somaj, the Jains, the Kayasth Society of India, and the Roman Catholic Church of America’ illustrates.<sup>96</sup> In these ways, while many Indian delegates stood on the stage to speak on their respective faiths as one of ten world’s religions, in public, they largely remained tethered to religious institutions and organisations.

However, as the days passed, the words, ‘Hindoos’ and ‘Hinduism’, began to appear more frequently in the newspapers.<sup>97</sup> Accompanying the words was the name Vivekananda — Vivekananda who represented no institution but claimed to ‘represent Hinduism ... in the sense of race and religion’ rather than a ‘Samaj’, ‘Society’, or a regional community.<sup>98</sup> Given that the common list of ‘world religions’ supplied by India had initially excluded ‘Hinduism’, and that Hinduism only began to surface towards the end of the event, the impact of Vivekananda on the popular perception of Hinduism was undoubtedly powerful. The concurrence of Vivekananda’s appearance on the stage and the increasing usage of ‘Hinduism’ thereafter indicates the level of ownership Vivekananda began to exercise over the category of Hinduism during and after the Parliament.

Vivekananda’s claim to represent Hinduism triggered critical reactions both in America and in the subcontinent. With the monk’s increasing popularity, the Bengali leader of the Brahmo Samaj, Protap Chunder Majumdar, and the President of the Theosophical Society, Henry Olcott, launched a series of invectives against Vivekananda. As the monk said in an interview, they exercised concerted effort to reduce his impact. Regarding the Theosophists and Christian missionaries, Vivekananda said: ‘[they] blackened my character from city to city,

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<sup>94</sup> ‘All Creeds Get Together’, *The Washington Post*, 11 Sep 1893, 1.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Barrows, *John Henry Barrows*, 273.

<sup>97</sup> Vivekananda was predominantly introduced with Hinduism, while other ‘Hindoo’ delegates were often linked with Brahminism or Theosophy. Furthermore, the phenomenon of ‘Hinduisation’, to borrow the word of Merwin Snell, was associated with Vivekananda. See his letter cited in, 9 March 1894, *The Indian Mirror*, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 13.

<sup>98</sup> Vivekananda to Alasinga, 20 Aug 1893, in Swami Vivekananda, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta, 1964), 44. Also see Vivekananda to Haridas Viharidas Deasi, Dewan of Junagad, 2 June 1894, Id., 113.



poor and friendless as I was there. They tried to drag me out from every house and to make every man who became my friend my enemy'.<sup>99</sup> Because Vivekananda posed a direct threat to the Christian American household, as will be seen in the next chapter, the effort of American Theosophists and Christian missionaries to denounce him as a fraud and to oust him from both the home and the nation does not come as a surprise.

However, Vivekananda also divulged a surprising account of an attack launched on him by the Brahmo Samaj. He lamented, 'I am ashamed to confess that one of my own countrymen took part in this and he is the leader of the reform party in India.'<sup>100</sup> Referring to Majumdar as a 'gentleman I kn[e]w ... from my childhood', Vivekananda charged, 'he tried underhand to do everything he could to injure me, to starve me, to kick me out of America.'<sup>101</sup> Given that both Bengali men delivered speeches on Hinduism with a strong nationalist spirit, Majumdar's counter-propaganda against Vivekananda can perhaps be explained as a reflection of the persisting national predicament of how to define and who represented Hinduism.

Indeed, one weapon that Majumdar frequently used against Vivekananda addressed precisely this issue — the unorthodox nature of the latter's Hinduism, and his inauthenticity as a *sannyasin*.<sup>102</sup> In a lecture delivered in Darjeeling in August 1894, Majumdar made the bizarre claim that the Parliament had 'no exponent of Hinduism'. Seeking to render Vivekananda into a heretic, he explained:<sup>103</sup>

Babu Norendra Nath *alias* Vivekananda ... might have done a good work there in his own way and have creditably represented a certain phase of Hinduism, but he could by no means be said to have been an Orthodox Hindu representative. For no Orthodox Hindu would cross the Kalapani, and partake of un-Hindu food with Europeans. In all these respects he was on the same footing with the Young Bengal.<sup>104</sup>

This excerpt, widely circulated and criticised in Indian newspapers in defence of Vivekananda, revealed Majumdar's discontent with the young Hindu monk who stole the limelight. Majumdar's evocation of Vivekananda's previous name, 'Norendra Nath', followed by '*alias* Vivekananda', was designed to challenge Vivekananda's authenticity. The term 'phase of

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<sup>99</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), vol.3, 210. (Henceforth, CWSV).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> More on Vivekananda's critics will be discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>103</sup> *Indian Mirror*, 4 August 1894, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 30.

<sup>104</sup> Cited in the *Indian Mirror*, 21 August 1894, Id., 38.

Hinduism' cast temporal limits to Vivekananda's faith, restricting its relevance to the present. In addition, Majumdar's comparison of Vivekananda's behaviour in America with Young Bengal sought to portray the monk as an immature rebel.

Having thus denounced Vivekananda, Majumdar drew a genealogy of Hindu leaders to distinguish his own master from that of Vivekananda, the illiterate mystic, Ramakrishna. He denounced Ramakrishna, whom he had previously publicly embraced. He rebuked Ramakrishna's followers' claim that 'Keshub Chunder Sen borrowed the very New Dispensation itself from the man he introduced to the public'.<sup>105</sup> He then attacked their lack of 'gratitude towards the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj for the service thus done' in popularising the illiterate saint.<sup>106</sup> In order to further distance the Brahmo Samaj from Ramakrishna of Vivekananda, Majumdar insisted that Ramakrishna, 'like other men', changed towards the end of his life.<sup>107</sup> He argued that Ramakrishna's followers, under the leadership of Vivekananda, created a new sect that 'offer[ed] the grossest and most barefaced idolatrous worship' and 'spread rank Vedantic pantheism in his name [while] aimlessly loafing about the country'.<sup>108</sup>

In his attempt to humanise Ramakrishna and attack 'idolatry' by the saint's devotees, Majumdar disclosed his displeasure with the events of the Parliament. His charges against Vivekananda not only followed Christian missionaries' generic attack on Hinduism, but also contradicted Keshub Chunder Sen's own mystic bent, and downplayed the tendency to self-aggrandisement that the latter displayed towards the end of his life. Furthermore, Majumdar's comment on the unstructured and unrooted aimless roaming of Vivekananda's *gurubhais* only revealed his discomfort with Vivekananda's position as a representative of 'Hinduism' detached from and unqualified by a regional basis or an organisation, a compromise that many religious reform organisations had had to make.<sup>109</sup>

Ripostes flowed forth in response. While the Americans who defended Vivekananda, such as the scholar of comparative religious studies Merwin-Marie Snell, verified and applauded the impact of Vivekananda in America, articles written by Indian editors turned their critical gaze towards Majumdar.<sup>110</sup> They dismissed the argument that Vivekananda had violated religious tradition by emphasising Vivekananda's ascetic status. They contended that

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<sup>105</sup> *The Indian Nation*, 14 December 1896, Id., 355.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Vivekananda only managed to secure land for the Belur Math in 1897.

<sup>110</sup> See the letter written by Merwin-Marie Snell cited in, 9 March 1894, *The Indian Mirror*, Basu (ed.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 13.

‘every Hindu knows that a Sannyasi is bound neither by caste rules nor social customs’ and simply rejected as unfactual the claim that Vivekananda had consumed ‘un-Hindu food with Europeans’.<sup>111</sup> Regarding Vivekananda’s lack of regional support, many articles reminded their reader that Vivekananda ‘was duly elected at a public meeting in Madras to represent Hinduism’.<sup>112</sup> Having tackled each of Majumdar’s accusations, these writers often turned on Majumdar for his own lack of patriotism and factionalism: they charged him with seeing Vivekananda as ‘a formidable rival’.<sup>113</sup> As the only ‘Bengali up to a recent period who was held in high esteem for his eloquence and piety in America’, Majumdar, the articles warned, ‘had grown caustic, bitter, thin skinned, and has declined in the spirit of reverence’.<sup>114</sup> In defending Vivekananda, they roundly condemned Majumdar for his jealousy.

If Majumdar tried to dethrone Vivekananda from his position as an authority of Hinduism, the Theosophical Society tried to smother the young monk under its wing. This is not to say that the Society had ever fully supported Vivekananda, or that it was ever wholly comfortable with his success in America. After 1897, when Vivekananda delivered his first Indian address in Madras, a spate of disputes unfolded between Vivekananda and the Theosophists. Although the Adyar organisation also raised questions about Vivekananda’s orthodoxy, before Vivekananda’s return to the subcontinent the Theosophists’ focus was on revisiting the relationship between Olcott and Vivekananda in the winter of 1892.

As discussed in Chapter 1, in December of 1892, Vivekananda had visited the headquarter of the Theosophical Society in Adyar. By this time, he had finally made the decision to attend the Parliament after months of travelling across the subcontinent and socialising with the leading men of each region. He had sought a meeting with Olcott to gain a letter of introduction to the international event. However, Olcott had stipulated that he would only write for Vivekananda if the latter officially joined the Society, and participated as its member. Vivekananda rejected the condition, and the relation between the two men turned acrimonious.

Now, however, the dispute revolved around one specific claim — the role of the Theosophists in paving the way for Vivekananda’s success in America. Numerous narratives

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<sup>111</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 21 August 1894, Id., 38. This article refuted Majumdar’s article published in *Unity and the Minister*. Similar argument was made in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 14 November 1893, Id., 297.

<sup>112</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 3 July 1894. Id., 26.; ‘The Great Hindu in America’, *The Indian Mirror*, August 1894, Id., 31.

<sup>113</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 4 August 1894, Id., 31.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*; *The Indian Nation*, 14 December 1896, Id., 355.

rendered Vivekananda as wholly indebted to the organisation. Olcott personally repeated the same story. He listed Vivekananda as one of the Society's members presenting at the Parliament in his diary, which was published in 1895.<sup>115</sup> In a similar vein, others argued that the Society had prepared the road for Vivekananda by spreading ideas on Hinduism and spirituality since the early years of mid-nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> Some insisted that Annie Besant and Olcott had introduced Vivekananda to the organisers of the Parliament, giving him the opportunity to become the international celebrity.<sup>117</sup> While Vivekananda remained silent during his sojourn in America, upon his return to India, he immediately challenged these statements.

In his first speech to an Indian audience titled, 'My Plan of Campaign', Vivekananda opened by describing his experience with the Theosophists, underlining the hostility he had faced from them. He argued that the Theosophists at the Parliament had given him 'looks of scorn', and that the Theosophists had undermined his work by preventing American members from attending his lecture series.<sup>118</sup> He expressed his astonishment and revulsion at the words Olcott had allegedly spoken during Vivekananda's deepest financial hardship, 'now the devil is going to die; God bless us all'.<sup>119</sup>

After laying bare the Theosophists' ploys, Vivekananda shared his plans for a campaign for the first time. As we saw in Chapter 1, it was in direct contrast with the ways and means of the Theosophical Society. He argued that his mission would be driven by compassion and fervent patriotism. He introduced his mission as inherently Indian, influenced neither by a foreign leadership nor by foreign conceptions of reform.<sup>120</sup> Ultimately, he proposed to create an all-India organisation for Hinduism, unbound by regional borders, and independent from existing reform movements.<sup>121</sup>

Vivekananda's speech in Madras created a ripple across the subcontinent. Olcott immediately penned a letter to the *Indian Mirror* to clarify his position. He denied most of the charges made against him, particularly the alleged hostile behaviour and comments made by either him or by Annie Besant. However, he agreed to one thing — his invitation to

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<sup>115</sup> Henry Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves 1893-96: The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 287.

<sup>116</sup> 'An open letter to Swami Vivekananda: to the editor of the Indian Mirror', *The Indian Mirror*, 27 February 1897, Basu (ed.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 163.

<sup>117</sup> 'Welcome to Swami Vivekananda', *The Indian Mirror*, 21 February 1897, Id., 147.

<sup>118</sup> Vivekananda, *CWSV*, vol.3, 209.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> See Chapter 1 for more on this argument.

Vivekananda to join his organisation. He explained his suggestion by arguing that he believed Vivekananda's affiliation with the Society would grant the monk easier access to American society.

As with Majumdar, Olcott's propaganda seem to have been driven by the uneasiness at the prospect of an independent Hindu speaking on behalf of the religion and the nation. Indeed, Theosophical Society had, from its early years, striven to render itself 'Indian'. Not only did it initiate a merger with Dayananda to plant its root in the subcontinent, but it continued to seek out the membership of leading elites as well as promoting numerous Indian 'mahatmas'. The Society became closer to the issues of reform and politics with Annie Besant's entrance to the scene. Stressing that she was not interested in 'Anglo-Indians' but only in 'the natives', she propagated a message that had similar tones to that of Vivekananda speaking of restoring India's spirituality rather than politics as India's route to freedom.<sup>122</sup> Although Besant publicly claimed the apolitical nature of the Society, the Society's network aided in her later political career.<sup>123</sup> She devoted her later life to restoring India back to its 'true Hindu' self. In addition to giving innumerable lectures, Besant established the Benares Hindu University with the help of the nationalist, Madan Mohan Malaviya. Mark Bevir has argued that Besant, through the Society's network with Allan Octavian Hume, himself a Theosophist, and with Indian elites, further aided in the formation and strengthening of the Indian National Congress and the Home Rule League.<sup>124</sup> Given that the Society and Besant both strove for Indian causes that leaned towards Hinduism, the emergence of an ethnic Indian widely accepted as an authentic spokesperson of Hinduism came too close to the Society's own aspirations.

For the Theosophical Society, Vivekananda's success posed an additional threat both within India and internationally. Between 1891 until 1895, the Theosophical Society underwent a civil war. With the death of one of the founders, Helena Blavatsky in 1891, the rift between the remaining founders — Henry Olcott and William Judge grew wider. Judge, officially the vice president of the Society, led the American section against Olcott. Seeing Olcott as deviating from Blavatsky's teaching, Judge fabricated a series of 'Mahatma' letters and tried to both taint Olcott's leadership and convince Besant to join him in the American branch. The internecine strife unfolded across America and India. Olcott grew jealous of

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<sup>122</sup> Arthur Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1963), 24.

<sup>123</sup> Mark Bevir, 'Theosophy as a Political Movement', in *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India*, ed. Antony Copley (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159–79, 160.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

Besant's visits to Judge, and he eventually launched legal case against Judge by convincing two 'Englishwomen, Besant and Countess Wachtmeister, and the three earlier arrived Englishmen, Old, Edge, and Sturdy' to support his side.<sup>125</sup> Given that the Society's war produced two factions between Anglo-India and America, Vivekananda's success in America and his support for Judge further fuelled Olcott's defamation of the monk.<sup>126</sup> Thus, the friction between Vivekananda and the Theosophical Society of Olcott was both territorial, as discussed in Chapter 1, and personal.

This is not to say that all the Indian delegates challenged Vivekananda. The category of Hinduism as Vivekananda rendered it — the unification of Hinduism with Buddhism to regenerate India — enabled him to create a bond with the Ceylonese Buddhist, Dharmapala. Despite their later disagreements, Vivekananda and Dharmapala remained friendly in the immediate aftermath of the Parliament.<sup>127</sup> They wrote for each other's journals, the *Parabuddhabharat* and *Mahabodhi Society Journal* respectively, and kept in touch throughout their independent journeys. Referring to the Hindu monk as a brother, Dharmapala depicted Vivekananda's performance at the Parliament as remarkable, leaving an 'indelible impression ... on the American people'.<sup>128</sup> He also argued that Vivekananda attested to the fact that India possessed spirituality that denied her status as 'politically a subjugated people, living under a foreign rule'.<sup>129</sup>

Furthermore, throughout the whirlwind of counter-propaganda, Dharmapala rose to Vivekananda's defence. On 14 May 1894 he delivered a lecture titled 'Hinduism in America and Swami Vivekananda' at the Minerva Theatre in Calcutta. With a number of prominent Bengali men in the audience, including Raja Peary Mohun Mukerji, Maharaja Bahadur Narendra Krishna Deb, and Romesh Chunder Mitter, Dharmapala set out to explain his friend Vivekananda's Hinduism: 'Swami Vivekanand had expounded the theory of Hindu philosophy in a liberal and cosmopolitan way which commanded the attention of not only the thoughtful men, but even the simple-minded men were in a position to grasp his expositions of Hindu philosophy'.<sup>130</sup> In so doing, Dharmapala argued, Vivekananda not only rendered Hinduism into a comprehensible religion, but also created a bond between India and Buddhist nations. Dharmapala continued, 'India was sacred not only to Indians but also to the four hundred and

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<sup>125</sup> Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives*, 29.

<sup>126</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>127</sup> See for example, Vivekananda to Alasinga, 11 July 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 128.

<sup>128</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 1894, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 28.

<sup>129</sup> *Id.*, 29.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

seventy-five millions of Buddhists in Ceylon, China, Japan, Burma, and the distant Siberia as the birthplace of the founder of the religion.’<sup>131</sup> Unlike other delegates to the Parliament who questioned Vivekananda’s legitimacy, Dharmapala drew the discussion back to the national scale. The Indian delegates’ project was regaining India’s ‘former glory’, as he wrote, ‘we all work together for the glory of our beloved mother India’.<sup>132</sup>

The immediate responses of Majumdar and the Theosophists to Vivekananda’s popularity at the Parliament reveal much about the cracks and divisions about how Hinduism was represented in India. The spirit of nationalism that had perpetuated universal brotherhood during the seventeen days of the event dissipated as the crowd dispersed, and Vivekananda emerged as a leading figure of Hinduism. Instead of a unified nationalism, there arose fierce contest over the authority and arguments about who defined and represented Hinduism. As Dharmapala’s public speeches and writings showed, the disparate religious allegiance could only create a unified voice through replacing the issue of religious representation with the larger cause of the nation.

Interestingly, ethnicity once again took the central stage in many of the articles that defended Vivekananda’s authenticity. Snell wrote, ‘never before has so authoritative a representative of genuine Hinduism — as opposed to the emasculated and Anglicised versions of it so common in these days — been accessible to American inquirers’.<sup>133</sup> An article in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* placed a similar emphasis:

Babu Protap Chandra Mozoomdar is well-known in that continent by religious men, and his eloquence and piety are appreciated. But they had known Parker, Newton, and Beecher; and Babu Protap Chandra was only one of them. The Americans wanted to see a Hindu “in his native jungles” a genuine Hindu not Christianized, humanized or Europeanized. They fancied they had found one such in Vivekananda. His figure, deportment and tenets attracted the greatest attention.<sup>134</sup>

As the word ‘genuine’ preceding ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Hindu’ in these two excerpts show, the display of ethnicity in his carefully concocted outfit and his apparently unadulterated thought and unmediated association to the religion rendered Vivekananda into a ‘real’ authority. As an

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<sup>131</sup> Id., 22-23.

<sup>132</sup> Id., 29; Dharmapala letter written on 1 October 1896, *The Indian Mirror*, 10 November 1896, Id., 250.

<sup>133</sup> letter written by Merwin-Marie Snell cited in, 9 March 1894, *Indian Mirror*, Id., 13.

<sup>134</sup> *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 14 November 1893, Id., 297. Also see ‘Welcome to Swami Vivekananda’, *The Indian Mirror*, 21 February 1897, Id., 356.

article in the *Indian Mirror* stated, Vivekananda succeeded because ‘he went to the West as a Hindu’, not as a member of a Samaj or Society.<sup>135</sup> Majumdar and the Theosophists’ had syncretised Hinduism to suit the palate of western audience and had limited their scope for true ‘representation’. On the other hand, Vivekananda’s detachment from an institution or locality rendered him into a ‘genuine’ Hindu, with his ethnicity and independence serving as his sole token of authority.

India’s brotherhood with America formed against Britain thus was rapidly reduced to the struggles within the nation. The disparate allegiances rendered the issue of universal brotherhood irrelevant. Instead they focused on the tricky question of Hindu representation within the subcontinent. While this fractured fraternity of Indian delegates shows the contested field of religious identities in late nineteenth century India, it also indicates that India’s ‘national’ and ‘religious’ representation could wield the international magnitude only when the issue of ‘authenticity’ was replaced by the that of ‘nationality’.

If Vivekananda’s racial and sartorial ‘authenticity’ gained him legitimacy at the Parliament, his popularity also depended on the elusive ways in which he formulated Hinduism in his speeches. As indicated by Dharmapala’s statement, Vivekananda spoke about Hinduism in a ‘liberal and cosmopolitan way’. More precisely, Vivekananda purposefully fashioned Hinduism into a religion open to malleable identities suitable to the international audience. We will now leave the national scale and return to the Parliament to analyse the field of protean belongings that allowed Vivekananda to catapult onto the international stage.

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<sup>135</sup> *The Indian Nation*, 14 December 1896, Id., 356.



## Vivekananda, the Hindoo Freelance and New Belongings



Image 13. Swami Vivekananda.<sup>136</sup>

Vivekananda's opening line, 'Sisters and Brothers of America', which received a standing ovation from seven thousand people, has become a trademark of his universalism. Many, including Narendra Modi as the introduction has shown, have embraced Vivekananda's grand gesture of universal kinship as the force that catapulted him onto the international scene. However, the very same rhetoric of universal brotherhood echoed throughout the seventeen days of the Parliament, reverberating in the self-aggrandising speeches of both Christian and Asian delegates. Furthermore, the type of Hinduism Vivekananda presented — one based on the Advaita Vedanta — had already been discussed by Orientalists such as Max Müller and Paul Deussen, and had long been incorporated into philosophical movements such as transcendentalism of New England, as well as by the 'fringe movements' in Germany and the Theosophical Society.<sup>137</sup>

Moreover, contrary to existing scholarship, Vivekananda did not promote Hinduism as a superior religion at the Parliament, although glimpses of this claim did shine through some of his speeches.<sup>138</sup> In expounding Hinduism's universality, he did not emphasise its dominance

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<sup>136</sup> *The Vivekananda Archives*, [http://vivekanandaarchive.org/gallery\\_detail.php?photo\\_gallery\\_id=15](http://vivekanandaarchive.org/gallery_detail.php?photo_gallery_id=15) (accessed, 27 January 2016)

<sup>137</sup> See Perry Myers, *German Visions of India, 1871-1918: Commandeering the Holy Ganges during the Kaiserreich* (Basingstoke, 2013).

<sup>138</sup> For example, see Shamita Basu, *Religious Revivalism as Nationalist Discourse: Swami Vivekananda and New Hinduism in Nineteenth-Century Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Jyotirmaya Sharma, *A Restatement of religion: Swami Vivekananda and the Making of Hindu Nationalism* (New Haven & London: 2013).

by the virtue of its moral superiority, as had been the practice of many Christian and Asian delegates. Rather, Vivekananda rendered Hinduism into a religion that encouraged differentiation through the preservation of individuality. This came across most clearly in his quote, ‘Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid.’<sup>139</sup>

Yet even here he was not alone. His presentation of Hinduism as a universal religion distinct from the eclecticism of the Theosophists resembled the ideas of Adolph Brodbeck of Hanover, who went to Chicago as an ‘apostle of idealism’.<sup>140</sup> Before the Parliament, Brodbeck had told the *New York Times* that the differences between religions were not predetermined, and that idealism did not require the ‘individual surrender of any conviction’.<sup>141</sup> What he called ‘religion of idealism’ ‘dispens[ed] with all dogma, it encourage[d] men to cultivate lofty aims and aspirations, for pure thoughts incline men to good morals and good actions’.<sup>142</sup> His ‘cult’, as he described it, did not promote uniformity, but ‘let each have his own belief or whatever is best in it’.<sup>143</sup> Without dogma, the all-embracing idealism of Brodbeck fostered ‘[a]ims, sympathy, and mutual help [that] form[ed] the fundamental principles’.<sup>144</sup> Thus, in the specific context of the Parliament, Vivekananda’s rendition of Hinduism into an all-encompassing religion was not a completely original revelation. Yet, compared to Brodbeck, whom he resembled intellectually, Vivekananda’s imprint on the event was far greater, as was his legacy.

This phenomenon of the ‘cyclonic Hindu monk’ can be explained by examining how Vivekananda advocated Hinduism. Unlike the Gujarati philosopher Manilal Dwivedi, who raked through Hindu philosophy, Vivekananda did not dwell on its scholarly principles. He confessed in his letter in 1895, ‘do you think people in this country would be much attracted if I talk of Hinduism? The very name of narrowness in ideas will scare them away!’<sup>145</sup> Instead, he promoted Hinduism as a means to achieve malleable selfhood. This struck a chord with existing discourses of self-cultivation prominent in New England. It also presented novel practices of self-empowerment.

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<sup>139</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Addresses at the Chicago Parliament of Religions* (Calcutta, 1907), 51.

<sup>140</sup> ‘The Apostle of Idealism’, *The New York Times*, 7 September 1893, 9.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Vivekananda to Shashi, undated 1895, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 203-204.

The Hinduism that Vivekananda offered opened new avenues of cultivating one's self without the requirement of complete conversion.<sup>146</sup> Unlike the Christian representatives who insisted on uniformity based on Christian standards and ethics, or his contemporary liberal religious reformers who promoted syncretism, Vivekananda claimed in his six speeches that Hinduism acknowledged all truths, and that it accepted various sects and forms of worship, without imposing any set dogma. This protection of differences was not merely essential for sustaining the composition of the universal whole. Difference, as embraced by Vivekananda's Hinduism, was a vital force that pushed humanity into the next stage of civilisation.

Indeed, Vivekananda asserted that difference turned the wheels of religious and human evolution. Using the metaphor of a plant sprouting from its seed, he explained, 'similar is the case with religion ... each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve its individuality and grow according to its own law of growth'.<sup>147</sup> Hinduism offered fertile ground for the 'law of growth' as it encompassed all religions at distinctive stages of spiritual progress, starting from 'the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, [to] the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains'.<sup>148</sup> Thus, by accentuating the preservation of differences, Vivekananda rendered Hinduism into a religion of self-cultivation embedded in 'realizing — not in believing, but in being and becoming' on one's own terms.<sup>149</sup>

This individuality in self-cultivation resonated with existing notions of selfhood widely embraced by the transatlantic bourgeois public. In particular, Vivekananda's emphasis on 'becoming' was similar to the Arnoldian sense of culture, which asserted not 'a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming'.<sup>150</sup> More specifically, it echoed the self-development motif of Unitarian philosophy harboured by many New England liberal reformers, according to whom being civilised and cultured required constant nurturing and unending becoming. This

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<sup>146</sup> While Hinduism was a religion that one could not convert to, the idea of engaging with Hinduism to become spiritual came in vogue in America. More on the spiritual movement, see Ursula King, *Indian Spirituality and Western Materialism: An Image and Its Function in the Reinterpretation of Modern Hinduism* (Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1985); Elizabeth De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga* (London: Continuum, 2004); Peter Van der Veer, 'Spirituality in Modern Society', *Social Research* 76: 4 (2009), 1097–1120.

<sup>147</sup> Seager, *The Dawn*, 337.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: And Other Writings* (Cambridge, 1993), 48. Also see Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Many liberal protestants allude to Arnold in their writing. John Henry Barrows also makes several references to Arnold in his description of the Parliament's initial stage of planning.

idea of ‘becoming’, illustrated through the metaphor of growth, was not merely about movement of human progress. At the crux of these concepts lay issues of identity.

In this process of growth, self-fashioning wove new identities. Some, such as the Romantic poet James Russell Lowell, promoted strong nationalism with a fixed gaze across the Atlantic Ocean. Writing in 1867 he argued that ‘to maintain ourselves, [Americans had to] achieve an equality in the more exclusive circle of culture, and to that end must submit ourselves to the European standard of intellectual weights and measures’.<sup>151</sup> Others, like Thomas Wentworth Higginson, advocated a cosmopolitan identity, asserting that even literature was to become ‘a vast commonwealth, with no dividing lines of nationality’.<sup>152</sup> Whether espousing nationalism or cosmopolitanism, these discourses of self-cultivation brought to the surface the necessity of consciously selecting one’s identity and one’s affiliation — not to dwell in the ascribed identity, whether national or religious, but to create a self through conscious decisions.

The Parliament paraded a variety of self-chosen identities. Indeed, a very large number of the Parliament’s attendees embraced atypical identities. The organisers’ emphasis on the authentic representation of the world religions invited individuals who could not be easily categorised or pinned down either by their ethnicity or religious affiliation. Some western participants attempted to exoticise themselves in their representation of a ‘foreign’ religion. The Theosophist Henrietta Mueller came ‘costumed in a blue silk gown of an Oriental character, and [wore] around her neck a string of enormous amber beads’.<sup>153</sup> The former American ambassador to Manila, Alexander Russell Webb, presented himself as a ‘Yankee Muslim’, creating ‘a big inrush’.<sup>154</sup> Other western figures dressed in ‘Oriental’ garments appeared on stage to speak for the Christianisation of the world. The Christian missionary ‘with the face of an Englishman and the attire and holiday dress of a Mongolian’, Reverend George T. Candling ‘of Tien-Tain, China’, celebrated the Parliament’s mark in ‘the new era of missionary enterprise and missionary hope ... behind [this Pentecost] is the conversion of the world’.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Cited in Butler, *Critical Americans*, 142.

<sup>152</sup> Cited in Butler, *Critical Americans*, 153.

<sup>153</sup> ‘Enthused the Delegates: An Eloquent Representative of the Orient’, *The Washington Post*, 26 Sep 1893, 1.

<sup>154</sup> *Inter Ocean*, 22 September 1893, cited in Umar F Abd-Allah, *Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 237.

<sup>155</sup> Cited in Barrows, *The World’s Parliament of Religions*, vol. 2, 1182.

In spite of his peculiar image, the crowd responded in approval ‘frequently interrupt[ing] [him] by applause’.<sup>156</sup>

While the performance of these western figures may appear to delineate a process of cementing orientalism, they symbolised not an exoticised Other, but an intimacy of strangeness. Webb, who converted to Islam in 1888 after a lengthy correspondence with Budruddin Abdullah Kur, a Bombay newspaper publisher, and the Bombay merchant Najee Abdullah Arab, presented the most lucid case of such self-representation. By building a network that spanned from Singapore, Rangoon, Calcutta, Hyderabad, to Bombay, Webb embarked on a long and complex journey towards becoming a Muslim. At each of these places, he gathered funding for his return home. The patronage of the leading members of Bombay Muslims Society, including Moulvi Ubaidullah and Ghulam Muhammad Munshi, officially rendered his trip to his native country into ‘American propaganda’.<sup>157</sup> This mission aimed to educate, and introduce Americans to the Muslim Brotherhood and eventually to transform them into ‘full-fledge Mohammedans’.<sup>158</sup> The project would culminate in the building of a mosque in each American city, for which ‘the rich Mohammedans of Bombay’, as one paper reported, ‘have guaranteed \$150,000’.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> ‘Enthused the Delegates: An Eloquent Representative of the Orient’, *The Washington Post*, 26 Sep 1893, 1.

<sup>157</sup> ‘The Propagation of Islam in America’, *The Times of India*, 24 Oct 1892, 5. In Rangoon, he received more than Rs. 10,000, and from Calcutta he went to Hyderabad to meet Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk, Mehdi Ali, who collected another Rs. 10,000 prior to Webb’s arrival; ‘Dinner and Address to Mr. A.R. Webb’, *The Times of India*, 3 Nov 1892, 6.

<sup>158</sup> ‘Muhammaed Webb’s Mission’, *The New York Times*, 25 Feb 1893, 1; More on Bombay Muslims, see Green, *Bombay Islam*.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

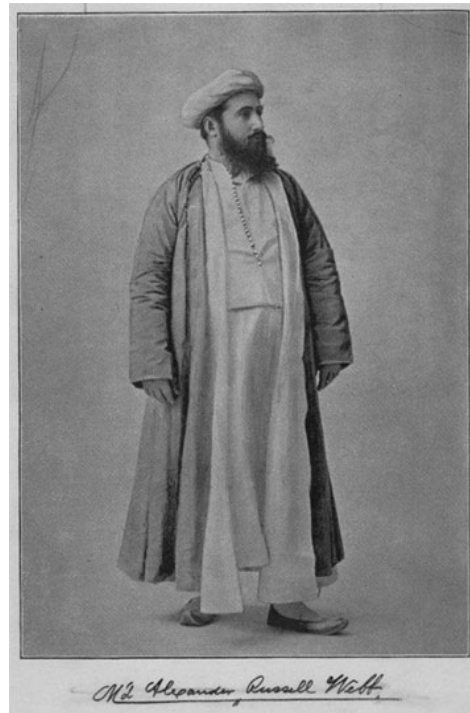


Image 14. Alexander Russell Webb.<sup>160</sup>

His shared goals with Bombay Muslims aside, Webb also introduced himself to his compatriots in a controversial manner. Presenting himself as the ‘American of the Americans’, he also appeared on the Parliament’s stage as the voice of ‘millions of Mussulmans in India, Turkey, and Egypt, who are looking to this Parliament of Religions with the deepest, the fondest hope’.<sup>161</sup> Newspapers also collaborated in this othering of the familiar. One article provided detailed examination of Webb’s features with the words, ‘his skin is tanned, and there is about him, especially in his movements, an Oriental air ... His face is almost dark enough for him to be mistaken for a light Hindu, and he talks with a slight foreign accent. With a fez he would easily pass for a Mohammedan.’<sup>162</sup> The crowd also cheered his malleable identity. When he explained, ‘[once] I came to go beneath the surface, to know what Islam really is, to know who and what the prophet of Arabia was, I changed my belief very materially, and I am proud to say that I am now a Mussulman’, the audience responded with a loud applause.<sup>163</sup>

Given Webb’s popularity and the presence of other self-exoticising delegates, it can be safely argued that the audience welcomed, and even anticipated, living examples and multiple

<sup>160</sup> Alexander Russell Webb, *The Three Lectures of Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb Delivered at Madras, Hyderabad (Deccan) and Bombay* (Madras: Printed at the Lawrence Asylum Press, 1892), 3.

<sup>161</sup> Barrows, *World’s Parliament of Religions*, vol. 2, 989.

<sup>162</sup> ‘Muhammed Webb’s Mission: to establish the faith of Islam here’, *The New York Times*, 25 Feb 1893, 1.

<sup>163</sup> The applause is also reported in Barrows, *World’s Parliament of Religions*, vol. 2, 989.

pathways of experiencing various identities of the self. Vivekananda framed Hinduism precisely in this manner. The chief difference between Webb and Vivekananda, was that unlike Webb, Vivekananda rendered Hinduism into a category of belonging, rather than a dogmatic religion requiring conversion.

Vivekananda demonstrated a self-fashioned identity in his speeches. While on the surface, he fulfilled the romanticised image of a Hindu monk with his majestic turban and ochre robe that drew much attention from the press, in his speeches he positioned himself as a contemporary cosmopolitan rather than a timeless Hindu. Of the six speeches he delivered, he identified himself as a 'Hindu' only on one occasion in the second speech titled 'Why We Disagree'. Unlike B.B. Nagarkar, who continuously emphasised his Brahmo Samaj affiliation, Vivekananda delivered his main speech on Hinduism from a perspective of belonging:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. I belong to a religion into whose sacred language, the Sanscrit, the word exclusion is untranslatable. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth...I belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation.<sup>164</sup>

Through the trope of belonging, Vivekananda advocated Hinduism as an inclusive belief system that sheltered 'all religions and all nations of the earth'. Thus, his audience could enjoy Hinduism without compromising their other affiliations. Much like Bombay's religious economy explored by Nile Green, Vivekananda simply provided his audience the option to choose, rather than asking for complete surrender or transformation. He demonstrated this by claiming that he himself 'belonged as much to India as to the world'.<sup>165</sup>

The American public, for its part, dwelled upon his self-promotion of elusive belonging. On 29 October 1894, an article titled 'Only a Hindoo Monk' described Vivekananda as 'something of a rarity'.<sup>166</sup> It first listed what he was not:

[Vivekananda] is a member of no religious sect, who claims no knowledge or powers of occultism, who is not a believer in the miracles of the yogis, who never saw the Dellah Lama [sic], and who does not think any more of him or of the other wonder workers of India than he does of the Christian missionaries who are working on the outskirts of the masses there, but who

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<sup>164</sup> Vivekananda, *Addresses*, 2.

<sup>165</sup> Cited in R.K. Dasgupta (ed.), *Swami Vivekananda: A Hundred Years since Chicago: A Commemorative Volume* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1994), 106.

<sup>166</sup> 'Only a Hindoo Monk', *The Washington Post*, 29 October 1894, 6.

simply announces himself as a religious student and a teacher to the world at large.<sup>167</sup>

Having established Vivekananda's independence from existing sects, the article explained that 'Mr. Kananda, a free lance [sic], outside the very outer wall', represented Hinduism both as a race and a religion.

Vivekananda consciously took advantage of his 'freelance' status. In his interviews, he insisted that he 'claim[ed] no affiliation with any religious sect, but occup[ied] the position of an observer', and thus settled himself as a 'teacher to mankind'.<sup>168</sup> Yet even here, he differentiated himself from other spiritual teachers like the Mahatmas of the Theosophists who rose to power through occultism. Arming himself with logic, he argued:

About the higher mysteries of life and existence I can do no more than speculate, as others do. Reincarnation seems to me to be the nearest to a logical explanation for many things with which we are confronted in the realm of religion. But I do not advance it as a doctrine. It is no more than a theory at best, and is not susceptible of proof except by personal experience, and that proof is good only for the man who has it. Your experience is nothing to me, nor mine to you. I am not a believer in miracles — they are repugnant to me in matters of religion.<sup>169</sup>

In addition to his appeal to reason, Vivekananda promoted himself as a familiar human being. Despite his conspicuous foreignness, he became an example of self-empowerment, a feasible model that anyone could emulate.

Particularly striking was his ability to renounce the given life of what the public imagined to be the height of prestige and knowledge. This caught the attention of his American audience. An article published on 1 March 1896 conveyed his dramatic life story with several contradictory prepositions:

*Although* he was born of one of the highest caste families of Bengal, he took voluntarily the vows of celibacy and poverty, *yet* he is a graduate of the University of Calcutta, and culture and intellect of unusual order are revealed, not only in the substance of his addresses and essays, but in the oratory that he displays.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> 'Vivekananda Believes Not in the Tricks of the Yogis', *The Washington Post*, 29 Oct 1894, 6.

<sup>170</sup> 'Rise of a New Cult', *The Washington Post*, 1 Mar 1896, 20. Emphasis added.



The stark contrast between the life before and after as indicated by the term ‘loss’ and the contradictory prepositions of ‘although’ and ‘yet’ moulded Vivekananda into an iconic example of a new, self-created, belonging.

However, his life history did not stand alone. Such stories of dramatic life transitions appeared frequently in American newspapers, particularly when they described Indian delegates. One article introduced Chakravarti with a similar emphasis. It stated that from a high caste Brahmin, ‘rank [that] is supposed to be higher than that even of the native kings’, Chakravarti ‘sacrificed’ his privilege for Theosophy, and ‘came to this country a plain Hindoo’.<sup>171</sup> In these excerpts, the transformation from a lifestyle of comfort and privilege to its uncertain opposite suggested a kind of empowerment and sovereignty over one’s self. The sacrifice of worldly attachment, and arrival at a point of a new self, appealed to a specific class of audience, what *The Washington Post* once described, the ‘serious people in New York’.<sup>172</sup>

Vivekananda rendered Hinduism palatable to them.<sup>173</sup> He showed that everyone could undergo such self-transformations, even without renouncing the world. As the previously cited *Washington Post* article indicated, Vivekananda’s ‘gospel of universal peace and love, of kindness, contentment, and charity’ presented a process of becoming that ‘even those who would not care to accept Eastern philosophy in its entirety may certainly gain profit and aid for daily life.’<sup>174</sup>

By the end of 1893, Vivekananda had gathered a group of followers mostly composed of wealthy women with transatlantic connections. A few of his close companions included the famous French soprano of the fin-de-siècle, Emma Calvé, wealthy socialites and philanthropists Josephine MacLeod and Sara Ole Bull, and the Irish educationist Margaret Noble, who later devoted her life to the cause of social service and Indian nationalism under the name Sister Nivedita. This circle of friends and followers invited him to hold salons in private clubs such as the Ladies’ Fortnightly Club, the Metropolitan Club, and the Twentieth Century Club, and to the homes of many upper-middle class elites, including that of Sarah Ellen Waldo, a distant relative of the transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson. In addition to hosting him, they also travelled with him across the Atlantic, opening doors to new social circles in London and Paris, thus knitting his transnational web of support.

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<sup>171</sup> ‘All Kinds of Theosophy’, *The Washington Post*, 10 Sep 1893, 10.

<sup>172</sup> ‘Rise of a New Cult’, *The Washington Post*, 1 Mar 1896, 20.

<sup>173</sup> More on these groups of people, see Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>174</sup> ‘Rise of a New Cult’, *The Washington Post*, 1 Mar 1896, 20.

Vivekananda's lectures often featured in newspapers as 'an interesting social incident of last evening'.<sup>175</sup> His last lecture of the year 1895 was on 'The Vedanta Philosophy', and he held it at the home of a socialite, Mrs. A.L. Barber, in the upper-class neighbourhood 871 Fifth Avenue in New York City. This talk gathered a crowd of 200 people with a song performed by 'Miss Thurston'. The same circle of attendees expected 'Ernest F. Fenollosa of the Boston Art Museum' to speak on 'Art as Related to Science' the following Saturday.<sup>176</sup>

In addition to such casual social gatherings, Vivekananda held more formal classes, hosted in conjunction with existing organisations. A lecture delivered on 25 February 1895 at the Long Island Historical Hall was in 'the joint benefit of the Swami Vivekananda Educational Work, the Publication Fund of the Brooklyn Ethical Association, and the Educational Work of the Froebel Society'.<sup>177</sup> Sometimes these events were grand occasions. His 'course of lectures at the Madison Square Concert Hall', held in March 1896, attracted an audience 'packed to overflowing'.<sup>178</sup>

Vivekananda's adaptable Hinduism thus appealed not only to a broad transatlantic bourgeoisie, but it also began to attract more serious devotees. The 'conversion' of his first western disciple caused a sensation. A French immigrant living in New York, Marie Louise, described her spiritual initiation as equivalent to rebirth:

[after being initiated by Vivekananda] I renounced the world and forgot the past. My theory now is that I was born. We are not supposed to live in this world, or to recollect anything. The new life is altogether different from the old. We recognize neither sex, nationality, nor anything else worldly. We recognize only the universe of spirit ... The order to which I belong is Hindu.<sup>179</sup>

By choosing her belonging, she created a new identity distinct from her past. Her transition was both self-emancipatory and self-empowering. The *Times of India* introduced Marie Louise as 'an American lady of French birth', who 'may be shortly described as the Annie Besant of New York, for, like Mrs. Besant she was long known as "a fearless, progressive, advanced" lady and ultimately became a follower of Hinduism'.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> 'Only a Hindoo Monk', *The Washington Post*, 29 October 1894, 6; 'The Social World', *The New York Times*, 3 May 1894, 8.

<sup>176</sup> 'The Social World', *The New York Times*, 8 March 1895, 2.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> 'Vivekananda Will Lecture Monday', *The New York Times*, 24 February 1895, 19; 'Rise of a New Cult', *The Washington Post*, 1 Mar 1896, 20.

<sup>179</sup> 'Marie Louise a Monk', *The New York Times*, 20 Mar 1896, 9.

<sup>180</sup> 'Notable', *The Times of India*, 24 Feb 1899, 4.

With the title of ‘Strange Career of a Former Parisienne’, the above-mentioned article continued to list the background of Vivekananda’s other western disciples. It concluded: ‘There are but two others in America. The second is Swami Kripananda, or Merciful Bliss. He was formerly an art critic on a leading New York daily newspaper. The third is Yogananda, or Joining Bliss, who was a teacher in Brooklyn. Each member of the order is independent of all others.’<sup>181</sup> As the article illustrated, with his western disciples and their anchorage in various localities and nationalities, Vivekananda created his own highly mobile ‘universal brotherhood’, and indeed ‘sisterhood’ given its diverse gendered composition.

## Conclusion

After the Parliament, two opposite reactions emerged in the Organising Committee. Some, such as the philosopher Paul Carus, praised the influence of Asian delegates for opening ‘a new era in the evolution of man’s religious life’.<sup>182</sup> The Secretary of the Organising Committee, Jenkin Lloyd Jones responded in accordance, commenting that the Parliament was ‘the triumph of man, not *the* man. It was the human soul unsexed as it was unsected’.<sup>183</sup>

Others challenged such idealistic interpretations. The chairman of the Parliament, John Henry Barrows wrote in 1895, ‘[t]here is nothing more grotesque and ridiculous in any of the mythologies than the rumors as to the wide acceptance in America and England of Oriental philosophies as substitutes for Christianity.’<sup>184</sup> A short pamphlet titled *The World’s First Parliament of Religions: Its Christian Spirit, Historic Greatness and Manifold Results* that appeared in Chicago in 1895, also denounced the popular narrative of Asia’s conquest of America. Carrying a compilation of published reviews of the Parliament from across the world, the book lamented the Christian representatives’ misuse of the international stage. The comment made by Reverend E.M. Wherry, a Presbyterian Missionary in India, revealed the nature of the ‘colonial world’ as Mitchell envisioned it. He wrote:

had the churches been more ready to use the opportunity, had *they* brought to America *their* representatives from all heathen lands; had we presented on

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Paul Carus, *The Dawn of the New Era and Other Essays* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1899), 10.

<sup>183</sup> Id., 15.

<sup>184</sup> Barrows, *Christianity, The World-Religion*, 294.

the platform our Chatterjis, Mukerjis, Ghoses, and other high class Christian native gentlemen, Vivekananda, Gandhi, and others, would not have been the conspicuous speakers they were. The Protestant Church lost a grand opportunity to impress the world.<sup>185</sup>

Wherry regretted the presence of the ‘authentic’, rather than the carefully selected ‘representatives’ of Oriental religions.

Indeed, the Parliament’s emphasis on authenticity starkly contrasted with the ordered relationship between representation and meaning observed at the nineteenth-century International Congress of Orientalists. Unlike the early congresses, the language of humanity and universalism did not project a specific imperial mapping of the world. Instead, by inviting ‘authentic’ representatives, the Parliament provided an uncharted canvas onto which novel vistas — some of them starkly different from each other — could be painted.

In addition, by deploying the language of hospitality and intimacy, Barrows and Indian delegates created a shared new discursive reality. In their joint construction of the world against the British Empire, India mattered particularly to Barrows as the chosen receiver of American hospitality. America remained an amicable point of reference to Indian delegates’ imagined liberated India, and would continue to present an ‘alternative West’ to the freedom fighters in the twentieth century.<sup>186</sup>

This map of universal brotherhood, however, could not veil the fractures in ‘Hinduism’ on the national scale. Authenticity once more became a major issue in Majumdar and Olcott’s public diatribes against Vivekananda in India, and the echoes of universal brotherhood quickly dissipated. Nonetheless, Vivekananda rose to fame precisely because he was unbound to a specific region or organisation. Ironically, while wearing ethnicity as his strongest proof of authenticity, Vivekananda had to transform Hinduism into the ambiguous practice of spirituality as we now know it. In so doing, he created his own community of ‘universal brotherhood’, largely composed of women.

Seen from this light, the Parliament was not a ‘liberal, western, and American quest’ that failed, as John Burris argues. It simply bred multiple, and not altogether coherent,

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<sup>185</sup> George S. Goodspeed, *The World’s Parliament of Religions: Its Christian Spirit, Historic Greatness and Manifold Results* (Chicago: Hill and Shuman, 1895), 19. Emphasis added.

<sup>186</sup> Nico Slate, *Coloured Cosmopolitanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2011); Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance and Indian Anticolonialism in North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

geographies of fraternity and community. Only by engaging with these various layers of space, we can understand the Parliament in both international, national, and local history. The veneer of intimacy between Barrows and Indian delegates was distinctly different from affective cosmopolitanism or Pan-Asianism of the twentieth century. Most of the malleable belonging that Vivekananda encouraged did not lead individuals to harbour ‘ethico-political practice’ of affective cosmopolitanism.<sup>187</sup> Nonetheless, Vivekananda did stimulate individuals or ‘singularities’, which, to borrow from Agamben, represented ‘what the State cannot tolerate in any way’ — ‘that singularities form a community without affirming an identity ... [or] any representable condition of belonging’.<sup>188</sup> As Chapter 5 will show, such singularities caused a moral panic in the colonial state in the twentieth century.

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<sup>187</sup> Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, 17.

<sup>188</sup> Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 85, cited in Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, 26.

# CHAPTER FOUR

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## SPACE AND SPECTACLE AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION AND THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS



Image 15. Swami Vivekananda Way, Chicago.<sup>1</sup>

On the streets of Chicago, numerous brown plaques denoting ‘honorary ways’ hover below the official green street labels. A practice dating from 1964, these street signs are dedicated to various celebrities who have ‘made Chicago great’.<sup>2</sup> As of 2015, Chicago boasts roughly

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<sup>1</sup> Jyoti Srivastava, ‘Swami Vivekananda Way’, *Public Art in Chicago Blog*, Friday 26 June 2009, <http://chicago-outdoor-sculptures.blogspot.co.uk/2009/06/swami-vivekanand-way.html> (accessed 18 July 2017).

<sup>2</sup> *Honorary Chicago*, <http://www.honorarychicago.com/> (accessed 18 July 2017).

‘1,500 [such] honorary street signs’, all approved by the City Council.<sup>3</sup> From Confucius, Mother Theresa to the infamous playboy Hugh Hefner, the recipients of this honour compose a motely list.

Approximately 1.5 miles south from Honorary Hugh Hefner Way, Michigan Avenue turns into, in a wonderful irony, Honorary Swami Vivekananda Way. Since 11 November 1995, Vivekananda’s name has marked the entrance to the Art Institute of Chicago, where the Parliament of the World’s Religions took place. Over time, his presence has garnered an overtly liberal meaning. As the Parliament became associated with the ideas of tolerance and universal brotherhood in the popular narrative — although the previous chapter has demonstrated its fractured fraternity — Vivekananda has become an icon of ‘modern interfaith movement’.<sup>4</sup> The process of justifying Vivekananda’s on-going presence at the Art Institute, and the conscious remembering of the Parliament as a sacred moment in American and world history, has produced interesting paradoxes.

Writing for *Huffington Post*, the ‘spiritual counsellor’, Philip Goldberg introduced Vivekananda with conviction. He asserted that Vivekananda ‘became an instant sensation’, ‘not as some carnival attraction’, but as a ‘fresh, erudite voice that spoke with authority ... [on] religious harmony and the universal truths’.<sup>5</sup> He explained that Vivekananda specifically inspired ‘open-minded, rational, spiritual seekers’.<sup>6</sup> He attributed the success of the Parliament to ‘the token Hindu’, who ‘ignited such a fervent response’ and ‘catalyzed an East-to-West transmission that has reshaped America’s spiritual landscape’.<sup>7</sup>

As lovely as Goldberg’s portrayal of the Parliament and Vivekananda is, what unfolded in the autumn of 1893 was quite the opposite. Vivekananda’s impact was intensely gendered and chaotic. Hours before Vivekananda’s speeches, women waited outside the building to catch a glimpse of the monk. Women created scenes of ‘madness’ that rendered Vivekananda into a ‘cyclonic Hindu monk’, an image that then re-invented Vivekananda into an icon of anti-

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<sup>3</sup> Erica Gunderson, ‘Ask Geoffrey: 1/14, Honorary Ways, Silver Skates & Chicago River’, *Chicago Tonight*, 14 January 2015, 10:00 a.m., <http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2015/01/14/ask-geoffrey-114> (accessed 18 July 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Philip Goldberg, ‘Celebrating Swami Vivekananda’s 150<sup>th</sup>’, *Huffpost*, 14 March 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/philip-goldberg/celebrating-swami-vivekananda-150th-birthday\\_b\\_2425529.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/philip-goldberg/celebrating-swami-vivekananda-150th-birthday_b_2425529.html) (accessed 18 July 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Goldberg uses this title to introduce himself on his personal website. See *Philip Goldberg*, <http://philipgoldberg.com/> (accessed 18 July 2017); Philip Goldberg, ‘Celebrating Swami Vivekananda’s 150<sup>th</sup>’, *Huffpost*, 14 March 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/philip-goldberg/celebrating-swami-vivekananda-150th-birthday\\_b\\_2425529.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/philip-goldberg/celebrating-swami-vivekananda-150th-birthday_b_2425529.html) (accessed 18 July 2017).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

colonial nationalism.<sup>8</sup> Goldberg's retelling of Vivekananda's place in the Parliament's history avoids any nuance of the sexualisation of Vivekananda's spirituality. All traces of women's 'deviance' in relation to the Hindu monk are erased and replaced with the story of the triumph of America's religious tolerance.

This chapter teases apart the dominant triumphalist narrative. It argues that Vivekananda's lingering presence at the Art Institute symbolises not the power of idealism but of disorder. It investigates the 'Vivekananda phenomenon' by juxtaposing the chaotic spatial dynamic that Vivekananda provoked at the Parliament with the British Royal Commission's struggle for order at the main Exposition site. Once again, the two events are examined together through the analytical prisms of space and spectacle.

Using space and spectacle allows us to cut through the imperial and colonial perspective that has for so long dominated the scholarship on museum and exhibitions. Knitting in the Foucauldian and Gramscian concepts of discipline and cultural hegemony, the pioneers of the subject, such as Tony Bennett and Bernard Cohn, saw the politics of display as inherently tied to that of (colonial) governance.<sup>9</sup> Expositions became one type of what Nicholas Dirks has termed 'cultural project[s] of control', which demonstrated the power of the colonial state to govern and re-write the history of India.<sup>10</sup> Many scholars, including Dirks and Timothy Mitchell, characterised colonialism as a 'modern' practice driven by a particular 'rage for order'.<sup>11</sup> Arranging objects for display and the 'apparatus of representation' was thus understood as one means of creating empires as well as nations. Scholars such as Janaki Nair and Tapati Gupta-Thakurta have analysed the reproduction of such colonial or 'modern' practice of 'surveillance, recording, classifying and evaluating' and reordering of space in the

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<sup>8</sup> See Vivekananda to Isabelle McKindley, 26 April 1894, and Vivekananda to Alasinga, 27 September 1894, in Swami Vivekananda, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 91, 148. In the former letter, Vivekananda did not show aversion to national fame, while in the second letter he condemned the overt politicisation of him made in Calcutta.

<sup>9</sup> Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *New Formations*, no.4 (1988), 73-102; Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Bernard Cohn, 'Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge, the British in India' in *The Bernard Cohn Omnibus* (New Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Other important works include: Carol A. Breckenridge, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31:2 (1989), 195-216; Nicholas B. Dirks (ed.), *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992); Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Berkeley, Lowie Museum of Anthropology; London: Scholar Press, 1983); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Dirks (ed.), *Colonialism and Culture*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 13-33; Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law 1800-1850* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016).



making of Mysore city and the National Museum of India.<sup>12</sup> Peter Hoffenberg, while hinting at the imperfection of the practice, similarly has highlighted the importance of exhibitions in the ‘the general nineteenth-century programs of nation-and empire-building and of ... social control’ as well as the moulding of individual identities.<sup>13</sup>

The resilience of ‘colonial’ structure — in the broad definition of Mitchell and Dirks — in the enterprise of international expositions and its concomitant contribution to modern governance was also bolstered through the spectacle that they generated. The systematic presentation of materials created an ‘instructive spectacle’ that aimed to ‘gratify the curious, or [educate] the student’.<sup>14</sup> The power of the gaze not only channelled knowledge, but also shaped the viewer’s behaviour. Using Foucault’s metaphor of panopticon, Bennett argues that expositions and museums were ‘a reformatory space of public manners’, in which visitors became self-disciplining citizens who created ‘consistent orderly public’ solely through the coercive power of sight.<sup>15</sup>

As historians and anthropologists began to shed light on the intermediaries — merchants, princes, and private collectors who donated their possessions for international expositions — the number of actors began to multiply and the trajectory of sight began to fragment. Saloni Mathur and Sadiya Qureshi have told the stories of those who were both forcibly and voluntarily put on display, and flipped the gaze onto the viewer, marginally empowering the viewed.<sup>16</sup> Filipa Lowndes Vicente has shed light on the perspective of a

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<sup>12</sup> Breckenridge argued that the culture of collection that evolved into international exhibitions must be understood within such a ‘new order’ of nation states that relied on ‘surveillance, recording, classifying and evaluating’. See fn1 in Breckenridge, ‘The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting’, 195-196; For a similar argument, see ‘Census, Map, Museum’ in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 163-185; Janaki Nair, *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region Under Princely Rule* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 27.

<sup>14</sup> James Dredge, *The World’s Columbian Exposition and the City of Chicago Viewed from An English Standpoint* (Chicago: H.V. Holmes, Lakeside Building, 1892), 48. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair* (Chicago, San Francisco: The Bancroft company, 1893), 83.

<sup>15</sup> Bennett, ‘The Exhibitionary Complex’, 81, 86. Bennett argues that these fairs became an aid rather than a threat to public order.

<sup>16</sup> See; Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 2007); Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the “Native” and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999); Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

colonised audience who expressed belonging to both the colony and the Empire.<sup>17</sup> While these new insights brought to the surface the complicated procedures through which objects arrived on stage, and pluralised the actors involved in the international enterprise, they still largely took the relationships of these people as either uni-directional or linear — hierarchy was manifested through vision as one engaged with racial othering, or chose to belong to a larger structure of the empire or the nation. Therefore, while the human displays now returned the gaze, the power channelled through sight remained tethered to larger structures of dominance and subjection, incarcerating the displayed within the colonial matrix.<sup>18</sup>

Two theories of spectacles can be used to explain the tenacity of this ‘colonial’ framework. First, spectacles, as theorised by Guy Debord, emitted hierarchy and asserted a single, non-plural meaning of the display. Debord argued, ‘the spectacle is the ruling order’s nonstop discourse about itself, its never-ending monologue of self-praise, its self-portrait at the stage of totalitarian domination of all aspects of life.’<sup>19</sup> Underlying this domineering force of the spectacle was the ‘modern passivity’ of the viewers.<sup>20</sup> Although not directly engaging with Debord, most historians have understood the effect of exhibitions on viewers in similar terms. Even as Hoffenberg gestures towards the agency of the participants in their challenging the imposed ‘political and social order’, he presumes the dominance of ‘natural order’ and contract of ‘consensus, and hierarchy’ that people ‘created by participation and not coercion’.<sup>21</sup>

This predisposition to order is also pivotal in Mitchell’s concept of the ‘apparatus of representation’.<sup>22</sup> Mitchell has argued that the age of exhibition, coeval with the age of

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<sup>17</sup> Filipa Lowndes Vincente, *Other Orientalisms: India Between Florence and Bombay, 1860-1900* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> The argument on citizenship is also made in Gail Lederman, *Manliness and Civilisation: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 35. G. Brown Goode, the assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in charge of classification at the Chicago Fair, also viewed expositions (and museums) as an event crucial to building citizenship. See G. Brown Goode, ‘Museums and Good Citizenship’, *Public Opinion* 17:31 (1894), 758; Peter Hoffenberg highlights that these international expositions perpetuated ‘an ordered grid of meaning and symbols in terms of which new forms of public interaction and identities were imagined and observed, and in which they took place’. See Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, xxiii.

<sup>19</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb (London: Rebel Press, 2005), 5 paragraph 24.

<sup>20</sup> Id., 3 paragraph 13.

<sup>21</sup> Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> For more on ‘apparatus of representation’, see Mitchell, Timothy Mitchell, ‘Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order’, in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), 302-303; and Mitchell *Colonising Egypt*, 5-10. He has argued that the use of ‘spectacle and visual arrangement’ created a way of seeing, understanding, and ruling the world as if through an exhibition.

colonialism, used ‘representation and meaning’ to create the world order.<sup>23</sup> ‘The order of things’, Mitchell explains, and ‘their meaning, of representation and reality’ were all intricately linked in a grid-like system that shaped the ways in which people, both within the metropole and the colonies, engaged with the world.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the omnipresent shadow of the modern obsession with order has remained the chief protagonist in the history of these international events and exhibition culture. The gaze, also, predominantly remained a tool of structural power — of the imperial, colonial, national, and the modern.

This chapter injects disturbance into this history of exhibition culture. The existing approaches, though insightful, overlook episodes of disorder that failed to align with the dominant order of things and people. This chapter, on the other hand, seeks to bring to the surface overlooked instances of disorder. These examples, the chapter argues, were not simple anomalies. Rather, these moments of lost-control reveal instances of subversion.

The chapter discusses two types of disorder at the setting of the Exposition and the Parliament. First, it questions the received scholarship’s neat depiction of exhibitions as an emblem of control and dominance. The members of the British Royal Commission admittedly tried to preserve order over their allotted territory within the Exposition site. They certainly displayed what Benton and Ford have characterised as the imperial and colonial ‘faith in ... order, and routines for chasing visions of order’.<sup>25</sup> However, the picture gets more complicated when the mechanics of arranging and allocating spaces are closely analysed. As the first two sections show, the members of the British Royal Commission faced the constant need to negotiate with other countries, American organisers, and even British manufacturers. Despite their efforts, they struggled to create an effective spectacle. They sought various ways, including nationalism, to mobilise British manufacturers to occupy the exhibition site, only to be outwitted by Germany and France. Furthermore, in the commissioners’ reaction to national celebrations, particularly, the Irish Day and the ‘British Empire Day’, their intense anxiety about transgression broke through the thin veneer of order. The Commission’s lack of control over the fluid space of national days thus exposed fissures of control rather than the power of surveillance.

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<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, ‘Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order’, 298-302.

<sup>24</sup> Id., 298.

<sup>25</sup> Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law 1800-1850*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016), 10. While Benton and Ford makes this argument mainly regarding law and the middlemen who enforced various competing legal structures, such ‘rage for order’ also appeared in other middlemen like the members of the Royal Commission.

Second, within the setting of the Parliament, the chapter liberates the gaze from the subjugation of the dominant power. In the space where diversity in race, religion, and gender composed the spectacle rather than commercial might and technological advancement of nations and empires, a different kind of disorder emerged. To begin with, the rules of engagement, and indeed of comportment, were much more unclear at the Parliament. Unlike the regimented behaviour of the viewer gazing the instructive spectacle at international exhibitions, observers of the human and ‘spiritual’ spectacle at the Parliament deviated from the expected cultural and gender norms. This provided an environment through which Vivekananda could experiment with alternative means of challenging, and even confiscating, colonial power through space and spectacle.

If, as Debord argued, the spectacle reveals ‘a social relation between people’, and ‘reality emerges within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real’, the disordered spectacle at the Parliament must also be analysed as an indicator of an alternative engagement with space, representation, and power.<sup>26</sup> The Parliament’s chaos was triggered by the cross-over between two less-politicised issues in internationalism — gender and religion. As the latter half of the chapter extracts Vivekananda out of the colonial context within which Mrinalini Sinha has examined ‘colonial masculinity’, it shows how Vivekananda subverted the gendered norms of this space.<sup>27</sup>

In the process of using the analytical tools of space and spectacle, the chapter hopes to destabilise the picture of order in international exhibitions and highlight the importance of disorder in international events. By shifting the emphasis, it will point out the hitherto ill-understood implications of Vivekananda’s presence at the Art Institute; we will see that the juxtaposition of Hugh Hefner and Vivekananda is not as ironic as it appears. Before entering the Parliament, however, we will first visit the Exposition, through the lens of the British Royal Commission.

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<sup>26</sup> Debord, *The Society*, 1 paragraph 4; Ibid., 2 paragraph 8.

<sup>27</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

## The Contract of Nationalism

In a controversial article written in 1892, Henry Truman Wood argued, ‘the British Section has always been the best at foreign exhibitions’.<sup>28</sup> He explained that reflecting Britain’s ‘old spirit of commercial enterprise’, the British Section ‘ha[d] ... always filled the largest space, taken the largest proportion of jury awards, and generally proved the most important’.<sup>29</sup> Evidently, he saw the size of exhibition space and the value of objects as two main components that signalled Britain’s prowess at international expositions. To ensure successful displays, the British Royal Commission had to depend on manufacturers. Yet curiously, in Wood’s writings dedicated to raising interest on the Chicago Exposition, he promoted nationalism, rather than profit, to capture the interests of British manufacturers. He asserted that by decorating the British Section, manufacturers gained ‘advantage for themselves and credit for their country’.<sup>30</sup>

Contrary to the logic of the Secretary of the British Royal Commission, the relationship between the exhibitor, his country, and the exhibited country did not always align in linear ways. To begin with, national exhibitions depended on diverse suppliers. At Chicago, the Indian Pavilion gave most space to the Austrian trader S.J. Tellery. Despite the Chinese government’s boycotting of the occasion, the ‘Chinese temple’ stood on the Midway Plaisance with the collaboration of five private merchants, three of whom were not Chinese.<sup>31</sup> This pluralisation of exhibitors commodified and splintered ‘national’ representation, sometimes to the detriment of the authority of nations. As Henry Em writes, the Chinese temple in Chicago became ‘a source of amusement, not respect’.<sup>32</sup>

From the perspective of national commissioners, cooperating with foreign traders provided much benefit. Reviewing the International Colonial and Export Exhibition of 1883 in Amsterdam, Samuel Digby reminisced that inviting the ‘European importers of Indian goods’ raised ‘the attractiveness of the [Indian] Court’.<sup>33</sup> It also increased tea exports, while lowering the Commission’s expenses.

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<sup>28</sup> Henry Wood, ‘Chicago and its Exhibition’, *The Nineteenth Century*, No. 182 (1892), 565. India Office Records and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F216/28.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Id., 563.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Em, *Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2013), fn31, 59.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Royal Commission for the Chicago Exhibition, 1893, *Official Catalogue of the British Section* (London: William Cowes & Sons, 1893), 465.

However, assigning space to exhibitors, whether national or foreign, proved more difficult, especially if the trader and his commodity had origins in two different states. The British Commission faced precisely this conundrum with the water company, Apollinaris. The owner of the company, a British national, wished to exhibit his water in the British Court. The water, however, originated from ‘a fountain at Remagen near Andernach on the Rhine ... bottled and labelled on the spot and thence shipped to London’.<sup>34</sup> A letter from Geheimer Regierungsrath to Wood on 12 January 1892 insisted upon ‘the German origin of this beverage’, because ‘the statistical reports from the Consulate of the U.S.A., [had always listed] the exports of Apollinaris Water as German produce’.<sup>35</sup> Further citing the ‘strict principle for all International Expositions’, which stipulated ‘that the goods can only be exhibited in the court of that country where they are produced, independently whether the owners belong to another country or not’, the letter insisted that the German Commission held the sole authority to distribute and negotiate space for the British company.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, while the lure of profit proved to be an efficient generator of interest for many manufacturers, their participation did not always bring credit to their nations, nor did nationalism apply to every manufacturer, as Wood had conjectured.

Nevertheless, for the Chicago Exposition, Wood continued to invoke nationalist sentiment. This was not simply because expositions generated a practice of imagining, writing, and making the nation as Hoffenberg and Gupta-Thurka have suggested. Certainly, nationalism emerged in exhibition culture, both in museums and in international expositions. Yet, as the following two sections will demonstrate, it also played a practical role. As the members of the British Royal Commission struggled with occupying space, they used nationalism as a contract to bind the exhibitors to the assigned space. This section will explore how Wood resorted to nationalism throughout the Commission’s attempt at balancing a small budget and numerous exhibitors.

The management of expenditure and exhibitors continued to trouble the Commission. As the size of exhibition space allotted for it corresponded to the prominence of the represented nation, the Commission sought to obtain a significant size for British exhibits. However, the larger the size, the more expensive its occupation became. Indeed, the disproportionate ratio of the total size of the exhibition space and the Commission’s budget remained a persistent

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<sup>34</sup> Geheimer Regierungsrath to Henry Trueman Wood, 12 January 1892, Chicago Exhibition 1893: General Administrative Correspondence 1892-1893, RSA, PR.MC/112/10/10.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

problem. Upon its establishment in 1891, the Commission received a meagre grant of £25,000 from the British government. As Table 1 shows, as compared to previous expositions, the ratio of one sq.ft. of space and the available fund for the Chicago Exposition was significantly low, at £0.05 compared to £0.329 for the Paris Exposition of 1867. Although the Chicago Exposition distributed space for free, the Commission had to bear the real burden of financing the display, providing ‘show cases, cabinets, shelving, counters, fittings ... countershafts, pulleys, belting etc.’.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the cost of utilising space remained very significant.

Table 1. Great Britain Exhibit in International Expositions as Listed in the Official Catalogue of the Royal Commission.

<b>International exhibitions</b>	<b>Space occupied by Great Britain and the colonies (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Ratio (1 sq.ft./ £)</b>
<b>Paris (1867)</b>	383,373	£126,000	£0.329
<b>Vienna (1873)</b>	169,827	£28,753	£0.169
<b>Philadelphia (1876)</b>	194,381	£39,981	£0.206
<b>Paris (1878)</b>	363,018	£66,983	£0.185
<b>Paris (1889)</b>	232,845	£29,422	£0.126
<b>Chicago (1893)</b>	500,000 (315,727 occupied by Great Britain)	£25,000 (initial amount)	£0.05 (initial amount)
		£60,000 (final amount)	£0.12 (final amount)

Royal Commission for the Chicago Exhibition, 1893, *Official Catalogue of the British Section* (London: William Cowes & Sons, 1893), ix.

To defray these expenses, the commissioners used methods they had deployed at the Exposition Universelle de 1889 in Paris — selling space to interested exhibitors. To generate

<sup>37</sup> *World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, U.S.A. 1893, Classification and Rules, Department of Liberal Arts*, 9. Chicago Exhibition Official Publications Issued by Exhibition Commission in Chicago, 1892-1893, RSA, PR.MC/112/13/5.

interest amongst potential buyers, each Chamber of Commerce within England acted as the Royal Commission's Local Committee, and began to disseminate information on the Exposition. Because, as James Dredge later confessed, 'prior to 1892, Chicago was little more than a name on the map to nine-tenths of [British] manufacturers, and of the remaining tenth, probably nearly all mistrusted its selection as a site for the World's Fair', he strove to promote Chicago as an attractive and highly lucrative city.<sup>38</sup> To this end, he delivered a lecture in 1892 at the Polytechnic Institute in London, which was later published as a pamphlet and circulated around England and America.<sup>39</sup> He argued that unlike previous European exhibitions in 'Paris, to Scandinavia, to the Mediterranean, or to Switzerland', the visit to Chicago would result in 'permanent benefits'.<sup>40</sup> He explained:

If the head of the nation lie upon the Atlantic shore, the heart beats in the middle States, and the sinews and muscles are in the west, and it may also be safely predicted that however many rival cities may in the future contest the trade and prosperity created by this western development, with Chicago, the metropolis of the great Lake region, must continue to retain her pre-eminence.<sup>41</sup>

With increased migration to the western states, spurred by the gold rush of the mid-nineteenth century and the concomitant expansion of infrastructure, Chicago had emerged as one of the major urban gateways to the rapidly developing west. Dredge went on to describe Chicago as cosmopolitan as New York and London, continuing, 'the tonnage entering and leaving its harbour is nearly as great as that of New York, and half as much as that of the port of London'.<sup>42</sup> He confidently foretold that 'the Columbian Exposition of 1893 [would be] the birth place of this new phase of greatness for Chicago'.<sup>43</sup>

Although the prospects of Chicago indeed appeared attractive, British manufacturers faced another hurdle — the McKinley Tariff. Passed in 1890, the McKinley Tariff significantly increased import taxes to America to such an extent that they essentially closed the American

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<sup>38</sup> Id., xxix.

<sup>39</sup> The circulation of this pamphlet to America indicates that the British Commission attempted to appease the American organisers.

<sup>40</sup> James Dredge, *The World's Colmbian Exposition and the City of Chicago Viewed from an English Standpoint* (Chciago: H.V. Holmes, Lakeside Building, 1892), 50.

<sup>41</sup> Id., 8.

<sup>42</sup> Id., 9.

<sup>43</sup> Id., 25.



market to foreign manufacturers.<sup>44</sup> As such, it dampened the incentive of European traders to send their exhibits to the Columbian Exposition. Some manufacturers, such as the Bristol-based chocolate and cocoa manufacturing company, J.S. Fry, rescinded its agreement to send goods as late as in November of 1892, only a few months before the Exposition's opening.<sup>45</sup>

Wood, Dredge and other foreign commissioners came together to negotiate with the American organisers to lift the tariff for the Exposition. By mid-September and early October, they reached an agreement with the American Treasury Department for the free entry of foreign exhibits. This included direct shipments of objects from foreign ports to Chicago without any additional 'examination, appraisement, or delay in transit', and 'without the necessity of having the declaration of the contents of the box containing the exhibits authenticated by a US Consul', as it would be done for 'ordinary merchandise'.<sup>46</sup>

However, the distinction between 'ordinary merchandise' and articles that stipulated the exemption of tax expired at the moment of sale. The regulation added that if the objects were sold, 'the duty imposed by the US Revenue Laws at date of importation shall be paid by the exhibitor'.<sup>47</sup> To make the matters worse, British exhibitors also had to bear the price of renting space from the Commission. Thus, to many interested British manufacturers, the risks and the potential costs of participating in the Chicago Exposition overshadowed any hope of profit.

At the end of 1892, the British government came forward with a solution. It awarded an additional grant of £35,000 'on the understanding that space should be provided free to British exhibitors'.<sup>48</sup> However, providing space to exhibitors without any charges guaranteed neither an increase in their interest in sending goods nor a profitable utilisation of space. Despite the access to a new market in the rapidly developing western states that Chicago presented, and the government and the Commission's effort at improving the terms of exhibiting at the event, only 'scanty numbers' expressed interest in participating on behalf of Great Britain.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> This was one way the *New York Times* explained the indifference shown by the British exhibitors. See 'Minister Lincoln and the World's Fair, British Manufacturers are indifferent', *The New York Times*, 12 June 1892, 1.

<sup>45</sup> J.S. Fry to Wood, 25 November 1892, Chicago Exhibition 1893: General administrative Correspondence 1891-1893, RSA, PR.MC/112/10/11.

<sup>46</sup> 'To Help Foreign Exhibitors', *The New York Times*, 17 September 1891, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Royal Commission for the Chicago Exhibition, 1893, *Official Catalogue*, viii.

<sup>49</sup> James Dredge to George Birdwood, 4 May 1892. Correspondence concerning disagreements regarding the British Section at the Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F216/31: Mar-Nov 1892.

Throughout this process of negotiating with potential exhibitors, Wood continued to evoke nationalism. When facing the barrier of the McKinley Tariff, Wood attempted to arouse the British manufacturers' competitive spirit against Americans. He wrote:

If the tariff is so potent an instrument for keeping out British goods, it is the interest of British manufacturers to fight it in every way ... to render it nugatory if it cannot be destroyed ... We must seize every opportunity of showing them — where we can — how much better our wares are than theirs, and so long as we can do this, we need not fear hostile tariffs.<sup>50</sup>

He envisioned that the national will of the people could overcome, even 'destroy', the tax imposed by the American government. Indeed, immediately after the British Government's additional grant, Wood requested an extra 60,000 sq.ft. from the Exposition organisers, stating that 'the feeling against the tariff ... largely subsided... replaced by enthusiasm'.<sup>51</sup> He imagined that the free distribution of space would remove the burden of expenditure on the interested parties, and spur their collaboration on behalf of their nation.

Given that the Commission's prime objective was 'promot[ing] British trade in the United States & elsewhere in the first place', Wood's resort to nationalism points to a strategic manoeuvre rather than a blind faith in patriotism.<sup>52</sup> As they could no longer form a contract based on exchange of space and rent, the commissioners sought to control the commercially-minded exhibitors through sentiments of obligation to the nation. In other words, through nationalism, the commissioners, particularly Wood, tried to forge an exclusive, non-transactional bond of loyalty. Thus, the Commission's goal in stoking patriotism was not necessarily to *demonstrate* the pride of belonging, but to *use* the sentiment as a medium of controlling the image of the British Section. A close examination of the Commission's management of space and spectacle will further elucidate this fixation with order.

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<sup>50</sup> Henry Wood, 'Chicago and its Exhibition', 563.

<sup>51</sup> 'Working for the Fair', *The New York Times*, 3 July 1892, 12.

<sup>52</sup> 17 January 1892, Dredge to Birdwood, 'Letters to Birdwood'. British Section at the Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F216/31: Mar-Nov 1892.

## The British Royal Commission's Struggle with Space and Ordered Spectacle

Soon after the World's Columbian Exposition closed, James Dredge summarised the dilemma of international exhibitions.<sup>53</sup> He described 'the classification of exhibits and the allotment of space' as 'two of the most difficult problems inseparable from the organisation of an Exhibition'.<sup>54</sup> To address the first problem, he suggested categorisation by classification rather than country of origin.<sup>55</sup> However, due to the 'entire impracticability' of this method, he concluded that each exhibition building usually allocated varying compartments of space to different nations.<sup>56</sup> This promoted comparisons between nations rather than between classified items, and rendered the second problem, the allotment of space, even more sensitive for the participating nations. Thus, by design, the culture of display at international expositions spurred international contest, or what Hoffenberg calls, 'intra-imperial competition' that aimed 'to increase trade and international status, celebrate imperial attachments and, not always inconsistently, negotiate local or national identities'.<sup>57</sup>

In this inherently competitive setting, size and spectacle constituted the two most important features by which the 'success' of a display was gauged. Yet, the relationship between size, space, and spectacle was much more complicated than has been hitherto understood. While the will to control this triad remained strong, the Commission struggled to maintain the size of its exhibit and occupy it effectively to produce the desired spectacle. The Commission's reaction to the reduction of space shows us that at the Exposition, space was not simply a matter of representation. It also became a medium of negotiation to maintain control over the exhibition territory. Here, contrary to Hoffenberg's argument, the representation of the British 'nation' superseded the place of her colonies; the Commission relinquished the latter to maximise the space for British manufactures.<sup>58</sup>

The Commission also faced challenges in its arrangement of displays. Rather than symbolising confidence in the imperial order as Mitchell presupposes in his work, the spectacle

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<sup>53</sup> Dredge's summary was in the official record of the Transportation Exhibit dedicated to the president of America, Grover Cleveland. See James Dredge, *A Record of the Transportation Exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893* (London: New York; Offices of "Engineering:" John Wiley & Sons, 1894).

<sup>54</sup> Dredge, *A Record*, xxxiv.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Id., xxxv.

<sup>57</sup> Hoffenberg, *Empire on Display*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Hoffenberg places much emphasis on imperial federation. See, Hoffenberg, *Empire on Display*, 19-20.

of the British exhibits as well as national festivals at the Columbian Exposition generated deep anxiety. In fact, the Commission could not present the British Section effectively, precisely because it failed to regulate its visual arrangement. Furthermore, the festivities of the Irish Day and the British Empire Day only accentuated the Commission's lack of control over the meaning of the visual representation. Thus, while the Commission was preoccupied with order, it was unable to systematically achieve it.

### *Size and Space*

First, as discussed in Chapter 2, the battle for the size of a national building unfolded in a similar manner as the territorialisation of empires and nation states. The size of an exhibit corresponded to the status of an empire and nation. Therefore, much of the British Commission's agenda at the outset aimed at securing more space in each exhibition building. The Commission had initially applied for a total of 200,000 sq.ft., the same amount demanded by Germany, and continued to vie for more space against the latter. However, space was not merely an object of desire. It also became a means of negotiation. The Commission used space to address various tensions with American organisers as well as within itself. Interestingly, these alternative roles of space emerged in moments of contraction rather than expansion.

The Commission encountered an array of spatial issues in each department. It believed that in 'Mining', the British exhibit lagged 'so far behind the United States that there [could] be no exhibit, except for a few isolated objects'.<sup>59</sup> In the Fine Arts Building, the lack of space, rather than the want of objects, presented a challenge. To make the matters worse, between 1891 and 1892, the Commission faced a sudden loss of space from 245,000 sq. ft. in September 1891 to 158,000 sq. ft. by May 1892 (see Table 2 for detail). Although in the end it managed to acquire a total of 500,000 sq. ft., this unexpected decrease in size caused a great panic within the organisation, particularly as the diminution occurred in the important Industrial Building.

There was no 'Industrial Building' as such. In fact, what the British Royal Commission called the 'Industrial Building' was officially titled the Manufacturing Building. Regardless, the Commission diverted all its efforts to the successful execution of this particular exhibit. The members of the Commission believed that unlike in 'Mining', in the area of industries Britain could demonstrate prowess over America, and they prioritised it as the 'only really important one (except Fine Arts)'.<sup>60</sup> The scale of the compartment offered to Britain in this

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<sup>59</sup> Dredge to Birdwood, 4 May 1892, Sir George Birdwood File, IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F216/31: Mar-Nov 1892.

<sup>60</sup> Dredge to Philip Cunliffe-Owen, 30 May 1892, Ibid.

building matched the Commission's excitement. As Dredge wrote in September 1891, 'the Exposition Executive allotted to England the best portion in the vast Industrial House'.<sup>61</sup>

Given the degree of excitement generated by the initial offer, the unexpected loss of space in the Industrial Building, from 120,000 sq. ft. to 33,000 sq.ft. came as a shock to members of the Commission. The issue dominated much of its correspondence after May 1892. A close examination of their responses to this change shows us how space was used to represent Britain's colonies. It also tells us much about the Commission's internal politics.

From early 1891, American organisers demanded the participation of different colonies of the British Empire. As the circulation letter in Chapter 2 indicates, even for the Exposition's Congress Auxiliary, the American organisers saw the importance of the presence, and especially 'fair representation' of India and other colonies at the event. After Wood advised 'making [the Commission] pleasurable to [the American organisers]', the Commission's executive staff agreed to this proposal.<sup>62</sup> Viscount Cross, the Secretary of State for India, promised to 'insure the best representation at the fair, not only of England, but of India and the colonies'.<sup>63</sup> Philip Cunliffe-Owen imparted a sovereign seal on this statement and affirmed that Cross's promise stood for that of the 'Queen and the Government'.<sup>64</sup>

However, their correspondence unveiled a starkly different attitude towards the place of Britain's colonies, particularly after the confiscation of space within the Industrial Building. Dredge contemplated:

What are our responsibilities towards [the colonies], or whether we shall not still have to provide space for them, or rather for some of the smaller ones. If we have to do this, our difficulty as regards want of space in the Industrial Hall may be further increased. I have heard on good authority that we shall be called upon to find space for *all* the Colonies in our allotments except in the Industrial Hall; ... the matter may be one of considerable importance or inconvenience to us. If as I am informed the Australian Colonies are not unlikely to refrain from exhibiting, on account of a want of agreement between them and the Chicago authorities on the question of space, it is clear that the sacrifice of the 20,000 sq.ft. in the Industrial Hall was a specially unfortunate one.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Dredge to Birdwood, 4 May 1892, Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Wood to Birdwood, 17 April 1891, Letters to Birdwood, Sir George Birdwood File, IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F216/29: 1891.

<sup>63</sup> 'England's Hearty Pledge', *New York Times*, 29 July 1891, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Dredge to Cunliffe-Owen Sir George Birdwood File, IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F216/31: Mar-Nov 1892. Emphasis in the Original.

Unlike the earlier British Expositions, the Commission for the Chicago Exposition prioritised national products and profits independent of the empire. This was partly — and importantly — because the commissioners had begun to see Britain’s colonies and dominions as potential competitors. Wood confessed, ‘the competition (if in this connection it is right to use the word) [would] come, not only from other countries, but from [Britain’s] own colonies’.<sup>66</sup> Thus, providing space for her colonies not only reduced the space for Great Britain, but also presented potential challenges to her own national representation.

In addition to the primacy of national interest, the ‘independence of some colonies [and] the indifference of others’, particularly that of the Government of India and the Indian Committee, which only met twice in the year of 1892, further reduced the appeal of fighting for the colonies’ space.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, the Commission decided to ‘give up the colonies’ in the Industrial Hall and ‘as a compensation’ preserved 20,000 sq.ft. for itself.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Wood, ‘Chicago and Its Exhibitions’, 564.

<sup>67</sup> Dredge to Philip Cunliffe-Owen, 30 May 1892, Sir George Birdwood File, IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F216/31: Mar-Nov 1892.

<sup>68</sup> Dredge, *A Record*, xxxix.

Table 2. Spatial distribution per building as planned and negotiated by the Royal Commission

	<b>September 1891 Space applied for (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>September 1891 Space received (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>May 1892 (sq.ft.)</b>
<b>Industrial Hall</b>	120,000	120,000	33,000 <sup>69</sup>
<b>Machinery</b>	40,000	40,000 (isolated exhibits)	40,000
<b>Agriculture</b>	-	25,000 (isolated exhibits)	25,000
<b>Electricity</b>	20,000	20,000	20,000
<b>Mining</b>	-	20,000	20,000
<b>Fine Arts</b>	20,000	20,000	20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>245,000</b>	<b>158,000</b>

Royal Commission for the Chicago Exhibition, 1893, *Official Catalogue of the British Section* (London: William Cowes & Sons, 1893), vii-ix.

This reaction to the deduction of space also revealed the internal tensions within the Commission. In May 1892, Dredge expressed his discontent with the American organisers. Despite the agreement made between the Commission and the Exposition Executives, the latter continued to ‘unwarrantably cut down’ Britain’s space ‘from time to time’.<sup>70</sup> The Commission interpreted the American organisers’ on-going confiscation of Britain’s space as an attempt to destroy Great Britain’s performance at the World’s Fair, and a theory of spatial sabotage gained wide currency amongst the members of the British Commission.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, rather than uniting the members of the Commission against America, the transnational conspiracy quickly heightened the organisation’s internal faction.

<sup>69</sup> 20,000 sq.ft. was taken away for the colonies, leaving 100,000 sq.ft. which was further deducted by 2/3.

<sup>70</sup> Dredge to Philip Cunliffe-Owen, 30 May 1892, Sir George Birdwood File, IOR and Private Papers, BL, Mss Eur F216/31: Mar-Nov 1892.

<sup>71</sup> Initially, Dredge remained indifferent to the long-held hypothesis. See Dredge to Birdwood, 4 May 1892, *Ibid.*

Dredge pointed to Wood's article in the *Nineteenth Century*, copies of which the *Chicago Herald* circulated to criticise the lack of British interest in the Exposition and the nationalist spirit of Wood, who served as a spokesperson for the Commission. Dredge suspected Wood's underhand collaboration with the Chicago press. As he wrote to George Birdwood,

I don't like the tone of the Chicago press nor of Chicago people; I don't like the ill concealed satisfaction shown at the prospect of a bad exhibit; run the readies-with which all the papers printed Wood's XIX VI centenary article ... As a number of copies in the article went to Chicago in official envelopes, the Commission is held responsible for it. These two influences are sufficient to account for the various successful and disastrous attempts to curtail our space. Add to this the indifference in England, and you can understand why the Chicago papers are delighted at the prospect of a poor English display. I don't blame them; they are right from their point of view. But we must take care of ourselves.<sup>72</sup>

His theory of a transatlantic conspiracy involving Wood gained ground when a fresh rumour emerged. On 11 May 1892, Birdwood divulged to Dredge, adding grist to the mill:

One of the high officials of the Exposition tells me that there is a concerted scheme to make the British exhibit as poor as possible, and that when Wood goes to Chicago, further efforts will be made to curtail our space and privilege. Another official on the other side of the House, so to speak, tells me that "There is no plot of the kind but that ... the Royal Commissions has played us completely into the hands of those who from political reasons decided to see us improperly represented, they propose to take full advantage of it."<sup>73</sup>

Upon receiving this letter, Dredge propagated the same suspicion of the alliance between Wood and Chicago. The story, to cite an excerpt from Dredge's letter to Birdwood in June 1892, went along the following lines:

The press has flattered him (Wood) persistently ... Someone said to a prominent Chicago newspaper man the other day — 'well if Wood swallows all that he'll be a sick man.' And the reply was — 'yes it's likely... I am informed *very confidentially* ... that Wood's arrival in Chicago is anxiously awaited by a certain clique which has influenced — or rather controls — some of the Chicago press, to still further restrict our following and cripple our exhibit.'<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Birdwood to Dredge, 11 May 1892, Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Dredge to Cunliffe-Owen, 13 May 1892, Ibid. Emphasis in the original.



Convinced of the Chicago-Wood agenda, Dredge began to limit Wood's authority. In preparation for Wood's visit to Chicago in June of 1892, he suggested to Birdwood and Owen that they set out detailed 'written introductions [with] a very narrow margin of liberty of action', and to forward a copy of the minute 'to Mr. Baker, the President of the Exposition, and to Colonel Davis, the director General'.<sup>75</sup> While this narrative rendered Wood into a traitor, a year later Wood revealed the culprit to be Dredge himself, who occasionally disclosed confidential information regarding the British Exhibit as well as the Commission to the so-called 'Chicago press'.<sup>76</sup>

What does such use of space as a medium of transaction and negotiation tell us about the Commission's management of space? The most obvious point would be that space had become a commodity of exchange bearing national and even personal value. More importantly, the Commission's turn to spatial transaction indicates its attempt at maintaining control. By denying space to the colonies, the Commission strove to preserve more room for Britain's objects in the Industrial Building. The members of the Commission saw the deduction of space as an indicator of covert political schemes, and used it as a pawn in its own institutional politics. Thus, while the Commission did not always have the upper hand in the maintenance of its own exhibition territory, it nonetheless used the medium of space to try to negotiate, and maintain, its power. Similar preoccupations with control would emerge, as we shall see, in the Commission's understanding of the ideal spectacle.

### *Ordered Spectacle*

In addition to the problem of securing the right size, the Commission faced the challenge of utilising the space effectively to create the desired spectacle. Dredge held in the official report that a good exhibition had to be 'large enough to prevent exhibits being unduly crowded, and not so vast as to present empty spaces and discourage examination'.<sup>77</sup> Regarding the Chicago Exposition, he paid special attention to the approaches taken by Germany, France, and Britain, writing:

Germany adopted a monumental system, in which the grandest of her exhibits in the General Industries Building were employed to build up the

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<sup>75</sup> Dredge to Cunliffe-Owen, 30 May 1892, Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Wood to Richard Webster, 8 June 1893, Chicago Exhibition 1893: Correspondence from Henry Trueman Wood as Secretary to the British Commissioners in Chicago, 1893, RSA, PR.MC/112/10/9.

<sup>77</sup> Dredge, *A Record*, xix.

effect ... For successful arrangement ... France was pre-eminent ... Among nearly all the nations present some general plan of arrangement — more or less successful — was evident... The British court alone showed little evidence of order in its arrangement of exhibits, and the show-cases there, many of them beautiful in themselves, appeared to have been set down by chance upon the space allotted them, without regard to anything but the alignment of passages.<sup>78</sup>

According to Dredge, the spectacle had to induce the effect of grandiosity and aesthetic pleasure. Furthermore, it had to demonstrate a pre-calculated plan. Both Germany and France had incorporated the architectural features of the exhibition building and the size and layout of the allocated space into the arrangement of their displays. Britain, on the other hand, had failed to accomplish either.

In the same report, Dredge tried to excavate the factors that led to the mismanagement of the British exhibits, by conducting a thorough comparison with the British Section at the Exposition Universelle de 1889. He first drew a table of revenues per space for the Paris and Columbian Expositions (Table 3). In doing so, he highlighted the stark contrast of the means through which the two exhibitions were financed. While in the case of the Paris Exhibition, the exhibitors bore 65.9% of the total expenditure, in the Columbian Exposition, the government grant sponsored the expenses entirely.

Then, in another table (Table 4) Dredge illustrated that despite the surplus of 90,400 sq.ft. allotted at Chicago, the number of exhibitors fell 214 short of that for Paris. Concomitantly, each exhibitor in Chicago enjoyed approximately twice the space as was available to those at Paris. This produced a sense of empty space (Table 6). Thus, he concluded, ‘space was wasted in the British section at Chicago to its own detriment and to that of the Exhibition’.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Id., xxxvii.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Table 3. Revenues of Paris Exhibition (1889) and Columbian Exposition (1893).

	<b>Paris</b>	<b>Chicago</b>
<b>Paid by exhibitors</b>	£19,401	-
<b>Contribution by colonies</b>	£1,200	-
<b>Indian Pavilion</b>	£3,549	-
<b>Concessions</b>	£1,619	-
<b>Donations etc.</b>	£3,653	-
<b>Government grant</b>	-	£60,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£29,422</b>	<b>£60,000</b>

James Dredge, *A Record of the Transportation Exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893*, xxx.

Table 4. Paris (1889). Total and Net Space, No. of Exhibitors, and Average Area of Exhibits.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Total allotment (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>Net allotment = 50% of total (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>No. of exhibitors</b>	<b>Average net space per exhibitor (sq.ft.)</b>
<b>Agriculture and food products</b>	43,500	21,750	90	242
<b>Machinery</b>	77,000	38,500	292	132
<b>General industries and liberal arts</b>	62,500	31,250	342	91
<b>Indian Pavilion</b>	8,700	4,350	9	483
<b>Total</b>	<b>191,700</b>	<b>95,850</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>131</b>

James Dredge, *A Record of the Transportation Exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893* (London: New York; Offices of "Engineering:" John Wiley & Sons, 1894), xxxv.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Dredge further states regarding the table, 'machinery includes space occupied by exhibits of mining, transportation, and electricity. Liberal Arts includes 1000 sq. feet in Social Economy.'

Table 5. Chicago (1893). Total and Net Space, No. of Exhibitors, and Average Area of Exhibits.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Total allotment (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>Net allotment = 50% of total (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>No. of exhibitors</b>	<b>Average net space per exhibitor (sq.ft)</b>
<b>Agriculture and food products</b>	13,900	6,950	59	118
<b>Machinery</b>	107,650	53,825	161	334
<b>General industries and liberal arts</b>	160,550	80,275	339	236
<b>Total</b>	<b>282,100</b>	<b>141,050</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>252</b>

James Dredge, *A Record of the Transportation Exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893* (London: New York; Offices of "Engineering:" John Wiley & Sons, 1894), xxxv.<sup>81</sup>

Table 6. Paris (1889). Spaces and Exhibitors in four chief groups, compared with those in Chicago (1893).

<b>Group</b>	<b>Excess or deficiency of net space (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>+ or – exhibitors (sq.ft.)</b>	<b>+ or – average space occupied per exhibitor (sq.ft.)</b>
<b>General industries</b>	-23,200	+57	-165
<b>Liberal arts</b>	-25,530	-39	-158
<b>Machinery</b>	+5,500	+57	-210
<b>Transportation</b>	-19,628	+10	-285
<b>Indian Pavilion</b>	+4,350	+9	+483

James Dredge, *A Record of the Transportation Exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893* (London: New York; Offices of "Engineering:" John Wiley & Sons, 1894), xxxvi.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> As further stated by Dredge, 'machinery included the transportation, electrical, and mining sections. General industries and liberal arts included fisheries.'

<sup>82</sup> Dredge notes, '+ signs indicate excess of space and exhibitors in the British Section at Paris, 1889; - signs indicate deficiency at Paris' compared those at Chicago.

He postulated three factors behind the Commission's mismanagement of the display. First, in addition to distance, the 'chilling effect produced by hostile criticism from the Eastern States of North America' deterred exhibitors from sending their objects to Chicago.<sup>83</sup> Second, 'a profound prejudice', triggered by the McKinley Tariff and 'an exaggerated fear of' having their inventions 'copied by astute and enterprising Americans — a practice not wholly unknown in this country' intensified the British manufacturers' reluctance to participate in the event.<sup>84</sup> Third and most conclusively, Dredge said, the exhibitors' 'abandoning space at the eleventh hour' led to the rather deflated display.<sup>85</sup>

While both Wood and Dredge strove to deal with the first two hurdles, they could neither prevent nor predict the last-minute cancellations by the British manufacturers. As we have seen in the previous section, even Wood's play upon their nationalist sentiments proved futile. For the misuse of space, Dredge blamed the British Government's promise of free distribution of space to interested exhibitors.<sup>86</sup> Calling attention to the first table, he argued that the Commission's success at Paris depended largely on the binding contract between exhibitors and the exhibition site; the exhibitors had to show up to the exposition as they had made direct investment. In his conclusion, Dredge emphatically advocated constructing a transactional relationship between exhibitors and space, echoing Wood's remark made years ago, 'organisation matter even more than a government grant' in creating an intended spectacle.<sup>87</sup>

Both Dredge and Wood's praise for organisation and contracts reveal the importance of ordered spectacle. The Commission had to wield what Mitchell has termed, the 'apparatus of representation', to create a desirable image of Britain on the international stage.<sup>88</sup> One way of accomplishing this was through forming a non-negotiable bond between the exhibition space and the British manufacturers.

However, while the will to order remained strong, the actual execution and maintenance of it proved more challenging. This became most clear in Wood's examination of 'transgressions' at the Irish Exhibits, on Irish Day, and on the British Empire Day. Ireland remained a sensitive issue throughout the Exposition. Even in his post-Exposition interview,

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<sup>83</sup> Id., xxix.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Id., xxxvii.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Freda Muriel Fisher, Née Wood; Daughter of Sir Henry Trueman Wood; Niece of Annie Besant: Autobiographical Memoir by Freda Muriel F: Circa 1935-1939: Typewritten, 1935-1939, 187. Western Manuscripts, BL, Add MS 74759:c 1935-1939.

<sup>88</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 5-10; Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order', 290.

Richard Webster faced questions on Home Rule directly preceded by those regarding the Exposition. Although the management and execution of the Irish Exhibit as well as the Irish Day caused much anxiety within the Commission, the former presented a less serious concern than the latter. This was because, to an extent, the Commission could control the effects of the Irish Exhibit, as the Irish Commissioner, J.C. Connolly, held his position under the Commission.

In contrast, the Irish Day proved far more challenging to manage. Due to the sheer number of Irish immigrants in Chicago, many expected a dense crowd on its ‘national’ day. Yet, as the American historian Hubert Howe Bancroft reported, out of the 30,000 estimated, only 2,000 people showed up.<sup>89</sup> The members of the British Commission also anticipated trouble on this day, as they saw the event’s potential to arouse turbulence at home. Webster and Wood treated the star of the event, James Shank, to an official banquet, while constantly surveying the scene for traces of disturbance surrounding the celebration.

Despite the meagre attendance, the Irish Day created a striking spectacle. As Bancroft described it:

it was an imposing procession, with bands galore and several military companies, everything and everybody was arrayed in green; the women with green dresses and hats, the men with green cravats and badges, and the horses with green plumes; while over the Electricity building floated the green flag of Erin, and even the lake assumed for the occasion a deeper hue of emerald.<sup>90</sup>

Although the event took place in the Midway Plaisance in the ‘Irish Village’, the celebration spilled over to the White City, tinting one of the most prized exhibition buildings with a shade of green. Despite the conspicuous nationalism on display, speeches of which we have seen in Chapter 2, Wood’s report to the Commission, written on the day of the event, firmly dismissed any hint of trouble.

Such quick dismissal raises questions about his (and other commissioners’) understanding of what constituted as urgent, politically troublesome, and problematic. The Commission regulated the commercial enterprise of Irish exhibits, but showed no concern whatsoever regarding its national displays, despite the fact that objects themselves constructed

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<sup>89</sup> Bancroft, *The Book*, 895.

<sup>90</sup> *Id.*, 895.

a history of Ireland as a distinct nation.<sup>91</sup> Yet, both Wood and the commissioners who had stayed back in London were immensely suspicious of the informal event of the Irish Day, only to disregard and reject the significance of its political messages.

Arguably, the distinction between their reactions towards the Irish Exhibit and the Irish Day lay in the Commission's want of control. Unlike the Irish Exhibit which was constructed under the auspices of the Commission, the Commission was not in charge of the Irish Day. The event remained entirely unpredictable. Such volatility, then, exposed the Commission's inability to wield its authority over the event. The Commission could only anxiously monitor any hint of 'disorderly' or 'abnormal' activities, and deal with their consequences.

The British Empire Day simmered with much the same tension. Unlike other empires, which celebrated their national spirit over and above their imperial status on their respective 'national days', Great Britain did not commemorate its sovereignty in full measure. Indeed, there was no 'British Day' as such. James Dredge led an informal celebration on Queen Victoria's birthday, 24 May 1893, at the Victoria House and the Canadian Building: Speeches were duly presented and the national anthem sung. The gathering progressed into a banquet in a hotel, for which Dredge received much praise from the commissioners of British colonies.

On the other hand, on 19 August the official British Empire Day took place on a much grander scale. With the largest gathering of all, of 213,000 people, it overshadowed all other national days, although Bancroft snidely commented it was 'second to the 4 of July celebration'.<sup>92</sup> In long speeches, various authorities extolled the British Empire. Wood spoke 'on the status and future of the dominion', followed by commissioners of Canada, India, Ceylon, Trinidad, and British Guiana. The celebration continued long into the night, with additional civic and military parades marching into the heart of Chicago. Surprisingly, however, the Commission did not take charge of the execution of the British Empire Day. In fact, the members of the Royal Commission in London opposed the idea altogether. Wood, as the only senior member of the Commission on site, repudiated his colleagues' 'decision not to have a British Day [as] most worrisome and expect[ed] it [to] cause a good deal of dissatisfaction'.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> For great analyses of the ways materials and monuments are used to write and envision history, see Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Wood to Wheatley, 20 July 1893, 'Chicago Exhibition 1893: Correspondence from Henry Trueman Wood as Secretary to the British Commissioners in Chicago, 1893', Chicago Exhibition 1893: Correspondence from Henry Trueman Wood as Secretary to the British Commissioners in Chicago, 1893, RSA, PR.MC/112/10/9.

The London commissioners' boycotting of the British Empire Day and their spying over the Irish Day point out an interesting consistency in their attitude towards these national days — their fear of disorder. Unlike the exhibits taking place in confined environments with structured galleries, these festivities did not operate within a confined space or time. They drew in large audiences and progressed from one location to another. Unlike the objects stationed in assigned compartments, the metaphors and symbolism paraded in these events carried the audience from the past to the present and inspired them to imagine the future. Furthermore, as the local committee of British residents in America took the initiative to host the British Empire Day, the commissioners' fear of disorder was heightened by the transatlantic distance and the hurdles of time.

So intense was the Commission's suspicion of the British Day — how the members referred to the event in their correspondence as opposed to the official title, British Empire Day — even Wood's affiliation with the event had to be dealt with caution. As late as 1 August 1893, eighteen days before the event, Wood continued to ponder whether to accept the local committee's invitation to the celebration. He wavered between three options — to take part in the celebration on behalf of the Royal Commission, or as an independent individual, or to remain 'entirely aloof from the function' if the Commission deemed it inappropriate.<sup>94</sup>

Although he ultimately decided to attend the event, the Commission's concerns about the British Day lingered on. This was most palpable in the members' correspondence. Immediately after the closing ceremony, Wood wrote two letters. In both letters, he assured his assistant Henry Wheatley that the British Day ended 'in every way successful', by which he meant that the event brought 'extremely good effect' on the 'American friends ... of the display and the loyal feelings shown by the crowd'.<sup>95</sup> In other words, the event ended with no uncontrollable or unexpected outbreaks. He had made the same point in his letter to Wheatley, dismissing the potential seditious spirit on the Irish Day. With a sense of relief, Wood concluded that the 'abstention of the Commission' did not make much difference to the outcome, and requested the report to be forwarded to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.<sup>96</sup>

The Commission's reaction to both the Irish Day and the British Empire Day was symptomatic of the discomfort festivals elicited. Festivals, while deemed inconsequential, held the potential to foment unexpected and undisciplined behaviour by crowds. Disordered

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<sup>94</sup> Wood to Wheatley, 1 August 1893, Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Wood to Wheatley, 21 August 1893, Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.



spectacle and uncontained space, consequently, exposed the Commission's lack of authority and ability to govern the given territory within the Exposition. Wood anticipated precisely such moments of chaos during national days. Because these national celebrations ended without any obvious unrest, he failed even to notice the polemical rhetoric flagrantly propagated during the Irish Day and evaluated the British Empire Day as 'in every way successful'.<sup>97</sup>

This deeply ingrained imperial obsession with order was also shared by Wood's contemporaries. Andrew Carnegie praised the 'self-governing capacity of the people' at the White City.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, S. Peabody praised the disciplined behaviour of the people, as he emphasised, 'there was no symbol of control, for no control was needed. There was no instance of excess, or intoxication, or disorder.'<sup>99</sup> However, their desire for controlled and neutral space, space that was neither positive (excessive) nor negative (under-represented), also laid bare the facade of discipline, as the orderly conduct on the Irish Day belied the echoes of Home Rule. The hopes for such order quickly fractured in the sacred space of the World's Columbian Exposition, the Parliament of the World's Religion.

## Space and Disordered Spectacle at the Parliament of the World's Religions

*I am to represent the African, and have been invited to give colour to the Parliament of Religions ... But I think the Parliament is already very well coloured, and if I have eyes, I think the colour is this time in the majority.*  
- Bishop B.W. Arnet<sup>100</sup>

Along with the main fair, the World's Columbian Exposition introduced twenty congresses that addressed topics ranging from woman's progress to art and education. They professed to address questions of the 'civilized life, voiced by the ablest living representatives ... to review the progress of mankind, and state the living problems now awaiting solution'.<sup>101</sup> Each month focused on a single theme. May saw the first congress on women's progress and September

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Andrew Carnegie, 'Value of the World's Fair to the American People', *The Engineering Magazine Co.: The World's Fair in Retrospect*, 6:4 (1894), 422.

<sup>99</sup> S. Peabody, 'The Educational and Moral Value of the Exposition', in Rossiter Johnson (ed.), *A History of the World's Columbian Exposition Held in Chicago in 1893* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), vol. 4, 495.

<sup>100</sup> Cited in Paul Carus, 'The Dawn of a New Religious Era', *The Monist* 4:3 (1894), 5.

<sup>101</sup> Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, 77.

launched the Parliament of the World's Religions. While following a strict structure of two to three presentations within an hour, these congresses also opened their door to the wider public.

The congresses' emphasis on the world's 'ablest living representatives', and their invitation to diverse audience, transformed them from a serious conference of experts searching for solutions to 'the living problems' into an extension of the main fair. If the Exposition showcased the material progress of each nation, the Congress Auxiliary displayed 'the foremost men and women in every department of progress'.<sup>102</sup> As Paul Carus described the Parliament of the World's Religions, 'differences not only of religious opinions, but also of races were represented in the Congress'.<sup>103</sup> Thus, the Parliament presented an immediate spectacle of diverse humanity rather than nations and empires seen at the Exposition.

While both 'exhibits' — whether of delegates at the Parliament or of objects at the Exposition — prized the power of display, the relationship of space and spectacle unfolded in vastly different ways in these two events. If the main fair reflected the colonial method of dominance through order, irrespective of its efficacy, the Parliament bred new kinds of spectacle that challenged this method of control.

Contrary to the Exposition, the organisers of the Parliament showed no explicit preference for structuring its space. The Parliament was not divided into objects or countries. Within the space of the venue, representatives of different religions mingled with each other. Carus remarked, 'You could see such an evangelist as Joseph Cook sitting by the side of liberal clergymen, such as Jenkin Lloyd Jones, of Chicago, and E.L. Rexford, of Boston. And these Christians again exchanged cordial greetings with the pagan Hindus and the atheistic Buddhists; an unprecedented spectacle!'<sup>104</sup> Bancroft described the Parliament as an historic event, 'never before perhaps was seen at one time and place such diversity of feature and costume. Men from almost every state and European nation were here; here were Hindoos in their gaudy robes; Japanese in their picturesque garb, and Chinamen in mandarin attire.'<sup>105</sup> As these statements suggest, the simultaneity of diversity rendered the event into 'a spectacle in the literal sense of the word'.<sup>106</sup>

While the novelty of a mixture of warring religions and races led idealists like Carus to believe that the 'great spectacle ... exhibited a longing for unity and mutual good

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<sup>102</sup> Id. 75.

<sup>103</sup> Carus, *The Dawn*, 5.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, 951.

<sup>106</sup> Carus, *The Dawn*, 4.

understanding', the differences, rather than the unity, between these delegates remained a central theme in newspapers and official publications.<sup>107</sup> Particularly, the costumes and physical features of Oriental delegates received detailed coverage. Some pandered to the romanticised notion of India. The *Washington Post* described Vivekananda in the following words: 'very majestic, and very noble in appearance and manner, and he realizes not only in his words, but in his costume — a cerise coloured habit tightly girded and a snowy turban folded with infinite grace around his splendid brow, all that the magic word India implies'.<sup>108</sup> The *St. Louis Observer* captured a moment in Dharmapala's lecture, 'with his black, curly locks thrown back from his broad brow, his keen, clear eye fixed upon the audience, his long brown fingers emphasising the utterances of his vibrant voice, he looked the very image of a propagandist'.<sup>109</sup> In each of his depiction of the 'Hindus at the World's Fair', published in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, Francis Albert Doughty included a sentence or two on his subjects' outfits. He noted that the representative of Vaishnavism, Narasimhachari of Madras wore 'all white topped with a voluminous turban', while Virchand Gandhi, the Secretary of the Jain Association, donned 'the European dress, with only the national turban in distinction from the hideous hat of our predilection'.<sup>110</sup> Describing Vivekananda as 'the most striking figure [that] one meets' at the event, he explained:

[Vivekananda] is a large well-built man, with the superb carriage of the Hindustanians, his face clean shaven, squarely moulded, regular features, white teeth, and with well-chiselled lips, that are usually parted in a benevolent smile while he is conversing. His finely poised head is crowned with either a lemon-coloured or a red turban, and his cassock (not the technical name for this garment), belted in at the waist and falling below the knees, alternates in a bright orange and a rich crimson. He speaks excellent English and replies readily to any questions asked in sincerity.<sup>111</sup>

While bringing to life Vivekananda's outfit hitherto unseen in America, Doughty also rendered him into a familiar figure, by highlighting his personality and fluency in English. The *New York World* and the *Woman's Tribune Washington* on 19 September and 9 October 1893

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<sup>107</sup> Id., 5.

<sup>108</sup> 'Rise of a New Cult', *The Washington Post*, 1 Mar 1896, 20.

<sup>109</sup> 'The World's Parliament of Religions', *St. Louis Observer*, 21 September 1893, cited in John S. Harding, *Mahayana Phoenix: Japan's Buddhists at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions* (New York; Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 13.

<sup>110</sup> Francis Albert Doughty, 'Hindus at the World's Fair', *Boston Evening Transcript* cited in *The Indian Mirror*, 11 November 1893, Basu (ed.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 2.

<sup>111</sup> Id., 1.

respectively portrayed Dharmapala in a recognisable portrait as well. Both stated, ‘Mr. Dharmapala ... Always dressed in spotless white, his hair parted in the middle, and coming together in a curl at the back, his face gentle and refined, he seemed just like a familiar portrait of Jesus’.<sup>112</sup> In these ways, non-Western delegates became both intimate and foreign to the audience and the readers of these accounts.

The simultaneous othering and familiarising of these delegates in the public sphere brought to the fore an unexpected and undesirable turn — the humanisation, and concomitant sexualisation, of the foreign religious figures, particularly Vivekananda. Compared to the tame descriptions of the ‘Brahmins’, Purushotam Rao and Gobing Burshad, who ‘politely’ conversed with visitors at the Indian Pavilion, Vivekananda’s appearance quickly garnered specifically gendered attention.<sup>113</sup> One article highlighted his ‘magnificent figure of manly beauty’, while the *Chicago Times* noted his sex appeal more explicitly, stating that Vivekananda, ‘a young man exceptionally handsome and with features that would command attention everywhere’, ‘attracted most notice, especially from ladies’.<sup>114</sup> As we will see, the female audience’s outnumbering of male audience at the Parliament turned Vivekananda from a curiosity to a potential threat to Christian masculinity.

While historians have long situated Vivekananda’s manliness within the ‘colonial masculinity’ of Bengal, his hyper-masculine identity did not solely arise as a reaction to the stereotype, ‘effeminate Bengali’, or from a romanticised image of a warrior Hindu monk, or from his call for physical exercise.<sup>115</sup> As we take Vivekananda out of Mrinalini Sinha’s platform of ‘colonial masculinity’ and instead place him within the space-spectacle dynamic of the Parliament, it becomes clear that the white women at the venue played a seminal role in the making of, and the politicisation of, our ‘Hindu cyclone’.<sup>116</sup> This confluence of gender, race, and space caused a *disorder* that bestowed much power and political capital on the monk.

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<sup>112</sup> *New York World*, 19 September 1893; *Woman’s Tribune Washington*, 9 October 1893, cited in Rajagopal Chattopadhyaya, *World’s Parliament of Religions, 1893: Participation from the Indian Subcontinent and the 1993 Parliament* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1995), 158.

<sup>113</sup> For more detail, see John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions, 1851-1893* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 134.

<sup>114</sup> *The Chicago Times*, 12 September 1893, cited in Rajagopal, *World’s Parliament*, 24.

<sup>115</sup> Mrinalini Sinha also briefly mentions Vivekananda within this context. See Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, 21; Also see Indira Chowdhury, ‘Spiritual Masculinity and Swami Vivekananda’, in *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 120-49.

<sup>116</sup> See Antoinette Burton’s work for similar unfolding of identity in the non-Indian context, Antoinette M. Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

To begin with, many congresses burst at the scenes with large audiences. Official publications, newspapers, and private accounts all took note of the number of attendees and the overcrowding of the Arts Building. As Bancroft recorded, the total attendance of these congresses fell ‘a little short of 1,000,000, of whom at least two thirds were women of more intelligent classes’.<sup>117</sup> The Parliament admitted ‘over six thousand people’ with tickets, and on one occasion, the crowd gathered two hours prior to the opening of the Building, with ‘several thousand people ... packed in a mass that reached to the sidewalk’.<sup>118</sup> Vivekananda was indisputably the source of attraction. Mistakenly calling him ‘professor’, one newspaper announced,

In going in and coming out of the building, he was daily beset by hundreds of women who almost fought with each other for a chance to get near him, and shake his hand...women of every denomination among his worshippers. Some of them were votaries of fashion who did not care what became of their fine toilets in the struggle, while others were the ‘mothers in Israel’ of the various churches of Chicago and elsewhere. The Professor seemed surprised at this homage, but he received it graciously enough until it became tiresome from repetition, and then he made his entries and exits at times when there were no crowds of women in the vestibule and corridors. Other strangers from the far East, in picturesque garb, and with a Midways Plaisance flavour about them, were also much sought after, but in a less degree.<sup>119</sup>

As indicated by this report, not only did women wait to hear his speeches or to catch a glimpse of his presence, but they also strove to gain physical proximity and even physical contact. In a way, he appeared to women of ‘every denomination’ more as a man than as a picturesque object of admiration or curiosity.

This distinction between Vivekananda and other delegates further rendered him into a man to be juxtaposed against Christian-American men. Indeed, the press contrasted Vivekananda’s combination of mildness and masculine features with what the Vice President of Sorosis Club, Jennie De La M. Lozier, called ‘little vices of [Christian] men’.<sup>120</sup> At the second vegetarian dinner of the V Club held in New York, with Vivekananda in the audience, Lozier introduced ‘drunkenness, loquaciousness, smoking, use of slang, insincerity or the

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<sup>117</sup> Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, 921.

<sup>118</sup> Id., 285.

<sup>119</sup> Haweis, H.R., ‘The Parliament of Religions’, *Daily Chronicle*, cited in *The Indian Mirror*, 28 November 1893, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 4.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Had No Meats at the Dinner’, *The New York Times*, 2 May 1894, 5.

trying to appear to be what they were not' as the main shortcomings of Christian men.<sup>121</sup> Lozier's exact description of the flaws of husbands illustrated the contrast between the former and the benevolent and 'intensely handsome' monk:

Men came home and hid themselves behind a newspaper. They never had anything pleasant to say. A woman who had been married forty years said to her husband: "I wish you would tell me that you love me. It is so long since you said it that I would like to hear how it sounds." ... some husbands were very nice when they were away from home and very disagreeable when by the fireside. One woman called her husband "a street angel."<sup>122</sup>

As scholars have noted, Vivekananda valued his female friends.<sup>123</sup> He entered the homes of his American hosts and forged bonds of kinship with the female members of the hosting families. In his correspondence, he openly declared his affection for the 'sisters' and 'mothers', and provided practical advice as well as spiritual guidance.<sup>124</sup> In some ways, Vivekananda offered his female hosts and followers companionship and support their husbands often failed to provide.

Vivekananda's insertion into the family lives of his followers became one argument frequently deployed to de-legitimise the monk. He confessed in an interview in 1897, 'at first, many felt foul of me, manufactured huge lies against me by saying that I was a fraud, that I had a harem of wives and half a regiment of children.'<sup>125</sup> This criticism not only aimed to challenge his asceticism, but the words 'harem' and 'illegitimate children' also attempted to cast him as a worse husband than the 'street angels'. The widely-embraced benevolence of Vivekananda, a virtue that distinguished him from Lozier's 'little vices of men', also became a quality that many sought to traduce. For instance, R. Haweis from the *Daily Chronicle*, refuted the 'recurrent and rhetorical use of the phrase "mild Hindu"' that accompanied Vivekananda.<sup>126</sup> Instead, Haweis portrayed the monk as a violent man. When Vivekananda

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Narasimha Sil makes a provocative argument. See Narasingha P. Sil, *Prophet Disarmed: Vivekananda and Nivedita* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University, 1997).

<sup>124</sup> For example, see his letters, Vivekananda to the Hale Sisters, 5 May 1895, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 225; Vivekananda to Mary Hale, undated, Id., 241; Vivekananda to Harriet Hale, 17 September 1896, Id., 307-309.

<sup>125</sup> 'The Missionary Work of the First Hindu Sannyasin to the West and His Plan of Regeneration of India', *Madras Times*, 7 February 1897, cited in the *Indian Mirror*, Basu (ed.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 130.

<sup>126</sup> Haweis, H.R., 'The Parliament of Religions', *Daily Chronicle*, cited in *Indian Mirror*, 28 November 1893, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 4.

criticised the activities of Christian missionaries in India, Haweis explained, ‘the furious monk waved his arms and almost foamed at the mouth’.<sup>127</sup>

If humanising the monk pulled him into the domestic realm, his physical attributes further sexualised him in the public domain. The *Washington Post* once explained the ‘overflowing’ of the audience during Vivekananda’s lecture series held at the Madison Square Concert Hall with a list of his physical traits: ‘thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, nearly six feet tall, and intensely handsome’.<sup>128</sup> News of Vivekananda’s physical charm crossed the seas and even reached India, as the *Indian Mirror* introduced him on 15 November 1893 as ‘the young Hindu Yogi, who, from all accounts, appears to have created a profound sensation by the grandeur of his appearance and address at the World’s Parliament of Religions at Chicago’.<sup>129</sup>

While Vivekananda’s physical features increased his popularity, it also attracted sharp criticism from some Christian writers. To emasculate non-Christian delegates was, indeed, a common practice. After the Parliament, a number made concerted effort to deny the Asian delegates’ masculinity. John Henry Barrows, who initially praised the Brahmo-Samaj representatives and Dharmapala, later highlighted the latter’s effeminate features. He remarked that the ‘thin, dark hand of the white-robed Dharmapala’, and his ‘gentleness, his unresentfulness, his helplessness in all practical matters, his quiet trust in Karma’, and the ‘infinitely’ slow bows of the Japanese’, awakened him to ‘realise anew the great separation between the languid Orient and the rising Occident’.<sup>130</sup> Other descriptions also included words, ‘the gentle Dharmapala of Ceylon’, and the ‘bright boyish face’ of Narasimhachari, that accentuated the non-western delegates’ unripened masculinity.<sup>131</sup>

This project of diminishing the masculinity of these delegates reached its peak with Vivekananda. An article published in a phrenology journal stripped the monk of his sexuality altogether. Analysing the very detailed measurements of Vivekananda’s physical features, the article dwelled on his ‘conic hands’. It read,

One of the most striking peculiarities of this man is the *femininity* indicated in nearly every contour of the figure, face, head and hands ... It would be difficult to find a woman in this country with a more typically feminine hand than that of this young monk ... His instincts are too

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> ‘Rise of a New Cult’, *The Washington Post*, 1 Mar 1896, 20.

<sup>129</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 15 November 1893, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 3.

<sup>130</sup> Mary Eleanor Barrows, *John Henry Barrows: A Memoir* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904), 286.

<sup>131</sup> Cited in Rajagopal, *World’s Parliament*, 137.

feminine to be compatible with much *conjugal* sentiment. Indeed, he says himself that he never had the slightest feeling of love for any woman.<sup>132</sup>

The article feminised the same features that attracted women to Vivekananda, and attempted to transform his sexuality. By doing so, it invalidated Vivekananda's manhood, in a clear attempt to preserve the conjugal sanctity of Christian American household. After all, another article pointed out, despite the charm of Vivekananda, 'it was from the Christian theologians on the platform ... that the women took their cue'.<sup>133</sup>

Vivekananda's critics also turned against the women who admired him — they rendered his female following as proof of his inadequate spirituality. The above-mentioned article on phrenology concluded that many people 'more thoughtful than the women who made a lion of Professor Vivekananda' noticed the irony of the delegates who 'so well endowed with brains, astute thinkers, should adhere to those heathenish religions'.<sup>134</sup> Similar belittling of women appeared in the writings of the Scottish missionary and prolific literary evangelist, John Murdoch. Refuting Vivekananda's speeches verbatim, he wrote, 'these women who did not have a care for Hinduism' gave their attention to Vivekananda solely for his outfit, 'to which ladies attach so much importance'.<sup>135</sup> He condemned Vivekananda for not adhering to the Hindu *sannyasi* dress code and accredited his fame solely to his sartorial sense. Majumdar, Murdoch insisted, had failed to gain a female following due to his dull outfit. America's fascination for Vivekananda was purely a result of curiosity, which he remarked, 'they have such an abundant supply [of]'.<sup>136</sup> By denigrating women as vacuous beings whose actions were solely motivated by curiosity and desire, these invectives proposed that women's support neither proved Vivekananda's spiritual clout nor Hinduism's superiority.

A facile reading of these degrading remarks about women may seem to indicate the state of sexism and patriarchy entrenched in Christian American society. However, when situated within the wider context of the role that women played in the Chicago Exposition, it becomes clear that these derogatory comments on women and Vivekananda signalled many Christian men's fear of losing their women's affections to an intruder as well as their fear of

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<sup>132</sup> Edger Beall, 'Swami Vivekananda', cited in *Indian Mirror*, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 77. Emphasis added.

<sup>133</sup> 30 November 1893, *Indian Mirror*, Id., 5.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> John Murdoch, *Swami Vivekananda on Hinduism: An Examination of His Address at the Chicago Parliament of Religions*. (Madras: The Christian Literature Society Press, 1895), 8.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.



women's disorder and 'deviance' that Vivekananda seemed to have unleashed both inside and outside the Parliament.<sup>137</sup>

At the Chicago Exposition, women occupied an important and independent place. The Women's Building, designed by Sophia Hayden, demonstrated the advances made by women and housed the works and products of female artists, manufactures, and industrialists. In addition, for the first time in the history of international expositions, an official body of Board of Lady Managers worked alongside the National Commission. Headed by Bertha Palmer, the wife of the millionaire Potter Palmer, the Board of Lady Managers supervised not only the Women's Building, Woman's Congress, and the works of women in other exhibits, but also managed other foreign female commissions. The European Commission, led by aristocrats and royals, administered the applications of different female organisations within each represented country to secure space at the Woman's Building.<sup>138</sup> The Board and the Commission also cooperated with female social organisations and transformed the Exposition into an event to represent women's movement across the world. The Bombay Sorosis Club, for instance, received an invitation letter from the New York branch to participate in the Congress Auxiliary.<sup>139</sup> Under the leadership of aristocrats and wealthy citizens, and the cooperation of transnational social organisations, the Board aimed to consolidate women's position at the Exposition.

Women's presence in this public affair was more conspicuous at the Congress Auxiliary. Even the authorities of the Exposition's National Commission saw the Congress as a gendered space. In introducing the Congress Auxiliary, the president of the Exposition, William Taylor Baker stated, 'these discussions will be largely engaged in by women, and in the gatherings of the brightest intellects of the world they will have a grand opportunity of demonstrating their leadership in the moral and social reforms and the educational advancement of the race.'<sup>140</sup> The members of the National Commission prized themselves in the Exposition's celebration and acknowledgement of women's work in the public. The public engagement and authority

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<sup>137</sup> Gender and the body of the female shaped and strengthened colonial authority. See Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>138</sup> Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein headed the English branch, Princess Friedrich Carl of Prussia headed the German Commission, and Madame Carnot led that of France.

<sup>139</sup> 'Bombay Sorosis Club', *The Times of India*, 10 March 1893, 6.

<sup>140</sup> *New York and the World's Fair: The Dinner Given in the Interest of the World's Columbian Exposition by the New York Members of the National Commission, at Delmonico's December 21, 1891*. (World's Columbian Exposition: Department of Publicity and Promotion, 1892), 26. Chicago Exhibition Official Publications Issued by Exhibition Commission in Chicago, 1892-1893. RSA, PR.MC/112/13/5.

of women served as evidence of the progress of the United States. As Chauncey Depew claimed, it showed ‘what the United States has done to dignify and ennoble womanhood and give her opportunity to make her way in the arts and industries’.<sup>141</sup> Given that the public role of women was not only expected but also celebrated, what could explain the outcome of the ‘Vivekananda phenomenon’ and the gendered attack on the monk and his female admirers?

The answer, this chapter argues, lies in the relationship between space and spectacle. As seen in the previous section, organisers, commissioners, and exhibitors prized order and discipline in their engagement with space and effective spectacle. The same was expected of women. Women, even while acting independently of the male authority, were expected to behave in a reserved manner at the Exposition. Such unspoken rules of comportment applied in the spaces where they were particularly objectified.

At the International Dress and Costume Exhibit — also called ‘congress of beauties’ and ‘beauty show on the plaisance’ — forty women from forty nations stood on the stage in their best garments.<sup>142</sup> With an orchestra and dancing girls, this exhibit attracted many visitors. Even in the crowd and the chaotic combination of entertainments, the official record reported, ‘the best of discipline was maintained’.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, when ‘the barmaids brought from England for the occasion’ drew in many customers to the White Horse Inn, ‘a reproduction of a famous hostlery at Ipswich’, women maintained professional behaviour. Bancroft remarked, ‘all were of the better class, never indulging in flirtation, and serving their tankards of ale or glasses of mulled port or claret’.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, in their study on gender at the Exposition, Manon Niquette and William Buzton have argued that despite women’s visibility at the Columbian Exposition,

the idea that women in public places could only be displayed as objects of desire was deeply embedded in people’s social habits ... The meeting between sexes never really materialized; all the fair could really offer was casual encounters between men and women whose sexual roles were too rigid to transform their tête-à-tête into a real discovery between members of gender categories.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Id., 9-10.

<sup>142</sup> World’s Columbian Exposition, *The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, (St. Louis, MO: N.D. Thompson Publishing, 1893), 319.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, 918.

<sup>145</sup> Manon Niquette, William Buxton, ‘Meet Me at the Fair: Sociability and Reflexivity in Nineteenth-Century World Expositions’, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 22: 1 (1997), <http://cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/977/883> (accessed 18 June 2016).

These accounts stand in stark contrast to the behaviour of women at the Parliament. While at the main fair, women behaved in the expected ways, at the Parliament, they created disarray. In a ‘mad rush for the platform’, women ‘climbed over chairs and tables to pay their compliments’ to Asian delegates.<sup>146</sup> Women ‘fought with each other’ even while spoiling their fine clothes to see and touch Vivekananda. Their private desires were unveiled in the public, and Vivekananda was a trigger of this exposure. Unlike the ‘handsome and polite’ natives ‘who served tea and waited on customers’, Vivekananda instigated untamed behaviour in women. Even without kissing the cheeks of several ‘motherly dames’ as the Shinto representative Shibata had done, Vivekananda seemed to release repressed sexual tension amongst these women in the public space of the religious Parliament.<sup>147</sup>

One reason this scene of unconstrained behaviour, unseen at other locations, infuriated Christian men was precisely the convergence of private behaviour and the public space. The Exposition had a gendered layout. As James Gilbert has argued, the Women’s Building served as a ‘transitional place’.<sup>148</sup> Situated ‘right at the doorstep of the Midway Plaisance’, the Woman’s Building hovered in between spheres of order at the White City and chaos at the Midway Plaisance.<sup>149</sup> Gilbert and Neil Harris’ descriptions further depict the volatile state of women in these public spaces. They write respectively,

The woman’s building could either be seen as a bridge between the ordered and the exotic, a checkpoint between the White City and the Midway, or in many cases it became a place to begin, to meet friends, to locate a comfortable and familiar position before journeying into the disorienting confusion and crowds.<sup>150</sup>

[W]omen, in the eyes of the exposition’s male sponsors, came close to slipping into the category of “otherness” reserved for “savages and “exotics”. They were redeemed only by their capacity to serve as mothers of civilization — a stereotype that some upper-and middle-class white women were only too happy to embrace to advance their own reform agenda.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 67-68.

<sup>147</sup> Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, 952; Cited in Harding, *Mahayana*, 167

<sup>148</sup> James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago’s Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 105.

<sup>149</sup> Neil Harris et al. (eds.), *Grand Illusions: Chicago’s World’s Fair of 1893* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993), 157.

<sup>150</sup> Gilbert, *Perfect Cities*, 105.

<sup>151</sup> Harris (eds.), *Grand Illusions*, 157.

The location of the Woman's Building as the gateway to both the White City and the Midway Plaisance indicated not just the building's position as the converging point of savagery and civilisation, but also its function as an incubator that protected and prepared visitors to enter either the 'New Jerusalem' or the 'Bazaar of Nations'. The building's location, as Harris suggests, signalled the in-between-ness of women. In their proximity to both civilisation and savagery, women remained foreign to the American male participants, who could only grasp their female companions through their comportment. But even the chaos at the Midway Plaisance was under control. As one Exposition authority, Harlow Higinbotham explained, 'by confining [the Midway Plaisance], it was also possible to control it ... so that proper decorum would be maintained'.<sup>152</sup>

The highly-prized order and discipline at the Exposition was thus inherently male. Andrew Carnegie and S.H. Peabody saw the 'self-governing capacity' of the audience at the Exposition as a 'gentlemanly behaviour' with 'no instance of excess, or intoxication, or disorder'.<sup>153</sup> The Parliament launched a completely opposite dynamic. If, as Peabody claimed, at the main fair site, 'there was no symbol of control, for no control was needed', the Parliament celebrated the 'surging mass' that spilled over to the building's exterior. This mess could only be mitigated by the Parliament's Secretary, William Pipe's bellowing, 'the stage would break down!'.<sup>154</sup>

The order and discipline maintained at the Exposition characterised a type of imperial power and method of governance. By the same token, the Parliament's celebration of positive spaces in its overflowing of people and its unintended disordered spectacle demonstrated a new form of anti-imperialistic sentiment. Benjamin W. Arnett, the only black representative at the Parliament, observed, 'I am to represent the African, and have been invited to give colour to the Parliament of Religions ... I think the Parliament is already very well coloured, and if I have eyes, I think the colour is this time in the majority'.<sup>155</sup> The pamphlets and newspapers following the event reflected similar sentiments, as they translated these scenes into a sight of conquest. Vivekananda soon adopted the nickname 'Hindu cyclone' or 'Hindu cyclonic monk' in both American and Indian newspapers.<sup>156</sup> His spiritual propaganda in the West became his

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<sup>152</sup> Cited in Gilbert, *Perfect Cities*, 95.

<sup>153</sup> Peabody, 'The Education and Moral Value', 495.

<sup>154</sup> Cited in Harding, *Mahayana*, 167.

<sup>155</sup> Cited in Carus, *The Dawn*, 5.

<sup>156</sup> In his commentary on Vivekananda, Nehru also highlights this nickname and the 'sensation' that Vivekananda created. See Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 187-88.

‘making conquests in other lands’.<sup>157</sup> The ‘minority’ representatives hypnotised the audience and conquered the space, unsettling the western male predilection for order. Thus, whether in their attempts at stripping Vivekananda of his manhood or of belittling his impact by making derogatory attacks on his female fans, the reaction of Christian writers revealed the vulnerability of Christian masculinity and its fear of losing dominance.

## Conclusion

*Conspicuous were the quaint headquarters of Germany, with its painted walls and many-hued tiled roofs and gables and towers of the fifteenth-century Dutch architect; the French offices, recalling memories of Versailles and the Petit Trianon; the Colonial hoe of New South Wales; the lofty, blackened timber spires of Sweden; the elaborate and tardily furnished architecture of Brazil. They were but transient structures doomed to speedy demolition, but they will long remain pictured under many aspects, and living always in the minds of visitors.*  
-James Dredge<sup>158</sup>

Umberto Eco famously argued that expositions exposed themselves.<sup>159</sup> By extension of this logic, the manners in which space and the politics of display unfolded in both the Exposition site and the Parliament also exposed *different* kinds of power. As the first half of the chapter has shown, the members of the British Royal Commission’s management of space reflected the broad psychological dimensions of the British Empire in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The Commission’s reaction to the deduction of space in the Industrial Building exposed the increasing tension with and suspicion of America, and its concerns about the competition of Canada and New South Wales. More importantly, the Commission’s obsession with maintaining order and control in both space and spectacle mirrored the imperial ‘rage for order’ and colonial fixation on classification and imposition of discipline.<sup>160</sup> However, under the veneer of order lay constant negotiation over space, and the futile deployment of nationalism.

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<sup>157</sup> ‘The Indian Nation Says’, *The Indian Mirror* in Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 156.

<sup>158</sup> James Dredge, *A Record*, xx.

<sup>159</sup> Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays Translated from the Italian by William Weaver* (London: Picador, 1987), 530.

<sup>160</sup> See Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 10.

What, then, does the Parliament, as the other exhibitionary event, reveal to us? The Parliament offered a virtual stage for issues left largely abandoned in mainstream international politics. Once exposed on the global stage under the garb of universalism, issues of religion, gender, and race were thrown up by an unexpected figure in a disordered spectacle. Therefore, while the Parliament's classification of world's religions may have reflected the imperial habit of classification, its exhibitionary nature presented an alternative engagement with space that ran counter to the imperial taming of territories.

This is not to say that moments of disorder instigated a nationalist sentiment. The 'apparatus of representation' and its order of meaning undoubtedly played an important role in India's national imagination. As Hoffenberg, Partha Mitter, and Gupta-Thakurta have shown, museums and exhibitions continued to be used in the consolidation of national history, and formed a part of independence movement.<sup>161</sup> Indian princes also expressed admiration for state-imposed restraints of behaviour. After his return from the Durbar in London, Ajit Singh emphatically praised 'the great love of order and discipline which Londoners showed'.<sup>162</sup> Contrary to such imperial and structural predilection for order, Vivekananda deconstructed the display of discipline, which symbolised western and modern power. In the coming decades, the subcontinent would witness numerous disordered spectacles, often in the form of popular protests against colonial rule. Therefore, the narrative of Vivekananda's 'conquest' of the West does not symbolise Hindu nationalists' 'deeply felt inferiority complex', as argued by Prabha Dixit.<sup>163</sup> Rather, it recalls a discovery of anti-imperial engagement with space that suggested an effective idiom of exposing and challenging the vulnerability of supposedly hegemonic, or dominant, power.

What happened after such conquests of space, in both cases of order and disorder? After all, international expositions were renowned for their ephemerality.<sup>164</sup> As the opening quote of Dredge suggests, the exposition officials also acknowledged such transitory nature of these grand fairs. They also recognised that these events survived in 'the minds of the visitors' or preserved in memorabilia.<sup>165</sup> At other times, the practice of executing international expositions

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<sup>161</sup> For the use of representation and order in post-colonial India, see Hoffenberg, *An Empire*; Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Gupta-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*.

<sup>162</sup> 31 October 1897, *Indian Spectator*, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 414.

<sup>163</sup> Prabha Dixit, 'The Political and Social Dimensions of Vivekananda's Ideology', in *Debating Vivekananda: A Reader* ed. A. Raghuramaraju (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 19.

<sup>164</sup> See, for instance, Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Exposition Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

<sup>165</sup> This is largely how scholars have argued for the permanent impact of the exhibition culture. See for instance, Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 12-13.

structured the ways of organising knowledge, such as creating permanent records or paving new fields of academic disciplines. However, to a large extent, the physicality of the Exposition and the highly-praised restrained behaviour of the audience have largely evaporated from the space where the World's Columbian Exposition took place. In contrast, the plaque reading 'Honorary Swami Vivekananda Way' still directs a visitor to the Art Institute, where the disordered spectacle reigned. Order may be forgotten from space, but it seems that disorder left its mark.

# CHAPTER FIVE

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## VIVEKANANDA, THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH, AND THE COLONIAL ANXIETY

*Don't be anxious even when I die, my very bones will work miracles. We must spread over the whole of India in ten years, short of this is no good.*  
- Vivekananda to Akhandananda, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1897<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines Vivekananda's 'nationalisation' after his return to India in 1897 into his afterlife. Contrary to the popular myth, the 'Vivekananda phenomenon' at the Parliament of the World's Religions did not transform him into a national figure accepted back at home. Rather, his refusal to engage with existing debates on Hindu social reform and his vague yet ambitiously expansive plan for the Ramakrishna Math and Mission provoked existing social reform organisations to challenge the monk. But things took a different turn after his death in 1902.

The first half of the chapter shows that Vivekananda appealed to the nation not because of his ideal of ascetic masculinity (as argued by Indira Chowdhury) nor his 'aggressive' Hindu nationalism (à la Jyotirmaya Sharma), but primarily because of his premature death.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it was only after his death that he was released from the hostile eyes and acid pens of his compatriots, and became a national figurehead. As the official historian of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Swami Gambhirananda, writes, with the partition of Bengal in 1905, the Math (monastery) saw 'a great demand for ... [the] works of Swami Vivekananda, [which gave] a fillip both to the [Math's main Bengali journal] and the sale department of Swami

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<sup>1</sup> Vivekananda to Akhandananda, 30 June 1897, Swami Vivekananda, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 344.

<sup>2</sup> Indira Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 120-149; Jyotirmaya Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion: Swami Vivekananda And the Making of Hindu Nationalism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013).



Vivekananda's books'.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously with the increased demand of Vivekananda's writings and pictures, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission also founded new branches across northern and southern India.

As the 'Spirit of Vivekananda', to borrow the description used by police informers, began to spread across the subcontinent, Vivekananda appeared more and more dangerous to the colonial state. Despite the monk's and the Math's official stance against politics, Gambhirananda confessed, 'in the opinion of [the patriots and the police], Vivekananda stood for political freedom'.<sup>4</sup> The latter half of the chapter explores this contradiction using police files, which are admittedly incomplete, but nonetheless helpful in painting a fuller picture of Vivekananda's nationalisation in India in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The police suspicion about Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Math had three spatial triggers.<sup>5</sup> First, the Math drew in people of various ages, political leanings, social classes, religions, and even nationalities. Since the Maths brought together social groups that were seen by the colonial state as belonging to disparate camps, the government's markers of classification — caste, location, and religion — could not definitively categorise the organisation. Second, the expansion of the Maths linked places which were not normally seen together by the state. The dispatching of *sannyasis* from various locations as well as potential circulation of 'seditious' pamphlets through the travelling *sannyasis* (ascetics) and Maths stoked anxiety in colonial authorities. Third, the premises of the monasteries came to be seen as a space of reformatory and even a purgatory that transformed its resident's personalities. The police struggled to cope with the conspicuously changed demeanour of former revolutionaries who were training groups of young boys at the Math. This combination of former political criminals and a band of youths suspended time; the police were haunted by the imminence of violence that could erupt — or so they believed — at any one of the monasteries.

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<sup>3</sup> Swami Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957), 166.

<sup>4</sup> Id., 212.

<sup>5</sup> On colonial anxiety, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Ranajit Guha, 'Not a Home in Empire', *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (1997), 482–93; Kim Wagner, "'Treading Upon Fires": The "Mutiny"-Motif and Colonial Anxieties in British India', *Past and Present* 218:1 (2013), 159–97; Harald Fischer-Tine (ed.), *Anxieties, Fear and Panic in Colonial Settings: Empires on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Mark Condos, *The Insecurity State: Punjab and the Making of Colonial Power in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

In these crucial ways, the Ramakrishna Math remained illegible to the state throughout the period. No amount of investigation made matters any clearer. As the colonial state could only catch a glimpse of Vivekananda's ghost in these spaces, it could not slot the Math into either 'political' or 'quasi-political' scales that it normally used to grade religious organisations. Even when the Math earned the label 'non-political', colonial authorities remained sceptical and doubted its apolitical nature. As the last section will show, the only person associated with the Math to fall victim to its concerns was a woman, Christine Greenstidel, whose request to return to the subcontinent was rejected by the colonial state, despite her confirmed 'non-political' status.

By examining Vivekananda's ideas in dialogue with police accounts, the chapter fills the existing gap between the study on Vivekananda as a 'political' icon and his 'spiritual' organisation.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, the chapter shows how Vivekananda's political dimensions, once again, emerged in and through space.

### **Vivekananda's Project of Expansion: the Ramakrishna Math and Mission (1893-1901)<sup>7</sup>**

*We must conquer the world or die. There is no other alternative. The sign of life is expansion; we must go out, expand, show life, or degrade, fester, and die.*  
-Vivekananda<sup>8</sup>

On 19 February 1897, Vivekananda returned to Calcutta. A grand reception on 28 February 1897, launched him into a public life, lecturing, touring, and training people both within and outside Bengal.<sup>9</sup> In May 1897, he called for a meeting of 'all the disciples' to establish 'The

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<sup>6</sup> Gwilym Beckerlegge's insightful work has mostly focused on the idea of *seva* and foreign branches of the Math. See Gwilym Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission: The Making of a Modern Hindu Movement* (New Delhi ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Gwilym Beckerlegge, 'The Early Spread of Vedanta Societies: An Example of "Imported Localism"', *Numen* 51: 3 (2004), 296–320; Gwilym Beckerlegge, *Swami Vivekananda's Legacy of Service* (New Delhi ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Some events are omitted in this section for the clarity and coherence of the chapter's argument. For more detailed history of the Math, see Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*; Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989). Rajagopal Chattopadhyaya, *Swami Vivekananda in India: A Corrective Biography* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora* (Madras: The Vyjayanti Press, 1897), 236.

<sup>9</sup> The details of his movement can be found in Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 2, 215-303. (Henceforth, LSV).

Ramakrishna Mission Association'.<sup>10</sup> The Association encompassed the overarching objects and principles of what would become the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It emphasised dedication to 'the good of humanity' under Ramakrishna's name.<sup>11</sup> Its activities included providing plague and famine relief as well as educating the poor and starting student homes.<sup>12</sup>

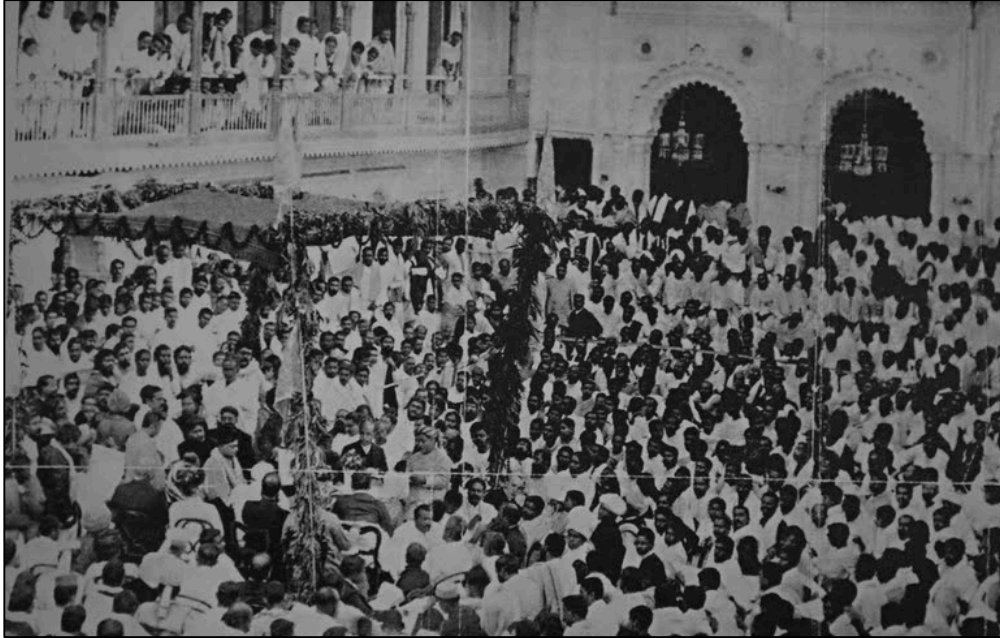


Image 16. Swami Vivekananda reception in Calcutta, 28 February 1897.<sup>13</sup>

The second meeting, also in early May, produced a set of rules to define the Association and delegated different leadership positions to Vivekananda's close *gurubhais* (brother monks).<sup>14</sup> Vivekananda emerged unchallenged as the president. Two vice presidents, one secretary, two undersecretaries, and one reader of scriptures served under his direction.<sup>15</sup> The Association had ambitious domestic and international agenda. The 'Indian Work Department' emphasised the building 'of the Maths and Ashramas in different parts of India for the training of Sannyasins'.<sup>16</sup> The 'Foreign Department' similarly directed sending of *sannyasis* abroad to

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<sup>10</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 119.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> 'Kolkata, February 28, 1897' in Photo Gallery, *Vivekananda Vedanta Network: Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston*, <http://vivekananda.org/archivephotoslideshow.asp?id=78> (accessed 17 July 2017).

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed list of positions and monks, see Gambhirananda, *History*, 232.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Id., 120.

‘bring about a closer relation[s] and better understanding between India and foreign countries’.<sup>17</sup>

The Math (monastery) thus housed and trained *sannyasis*, while the Mission led *seva* (service for humanity) activities. Despite these distinct responsibilities, until they were legally separated in 1909, the two words, ‘Math’ and ‘Mission’, were used interchangeably under the umbrella of the Association.<sup>18</sup> However, as Gambhirananda noted, with the founding of Belur Math (or the Ramakrishna Math’s headquarters at Belur in Bengal), ‘the Mission, as an organisation, was silently pushed into the background’, and ‘the monks and their monastery’ took charge of the Association.<sup>19</sup>

Once the Ramakrishna Math headquarters was established at Belur in 1898 (the ceremony was held on 9 December 1897, and the grounds were finalised on 2 January 1898), Vivekananda’s project to ‘spread over the whole of India’ began.<sup>20</sup> He dispatched his *gurubhais* to different locations to found new branches.<sup>21</sup> He envisioned the Belur Math to serve as the central institution with other Maths ‘abid[ing] by [its] rules’.<sup>22</sup> Under his supervision, eleven regional Maths were created. These included his first Vedanta Society in New York (1894), Ramakrishna Math in Chennai (1897), Belur Math in Bengal (1897), Varanasi Home of Service (1900), Kankhal Mission (1901), Mayavati Advaita Ashrama (1899), Baghbazar Math (1899), Gourhati Ashram (1871), Saragachi Math (1897), Dhaka Math (1899), and the Vedanta Society in San Francisco (1900).<sup>23</sup>

The overall distribution of the branches reflected the geography of spirituality that Vivekananda had traversed as a *parivrājaka* (wandering monk). Most striking was his aim to unify Bengal with Madras (see Map 3). The Madras branch was the first non-Bengali Math established in India. Then gradually, the monasteries spread across northern part of the subcontinent.

In addition to the Maths and several associated organisations, Vivekananda also set up new journals. *Prabuddha Bharata* started in July 1896 in Madras, moving to Almora in August

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Id., 131.

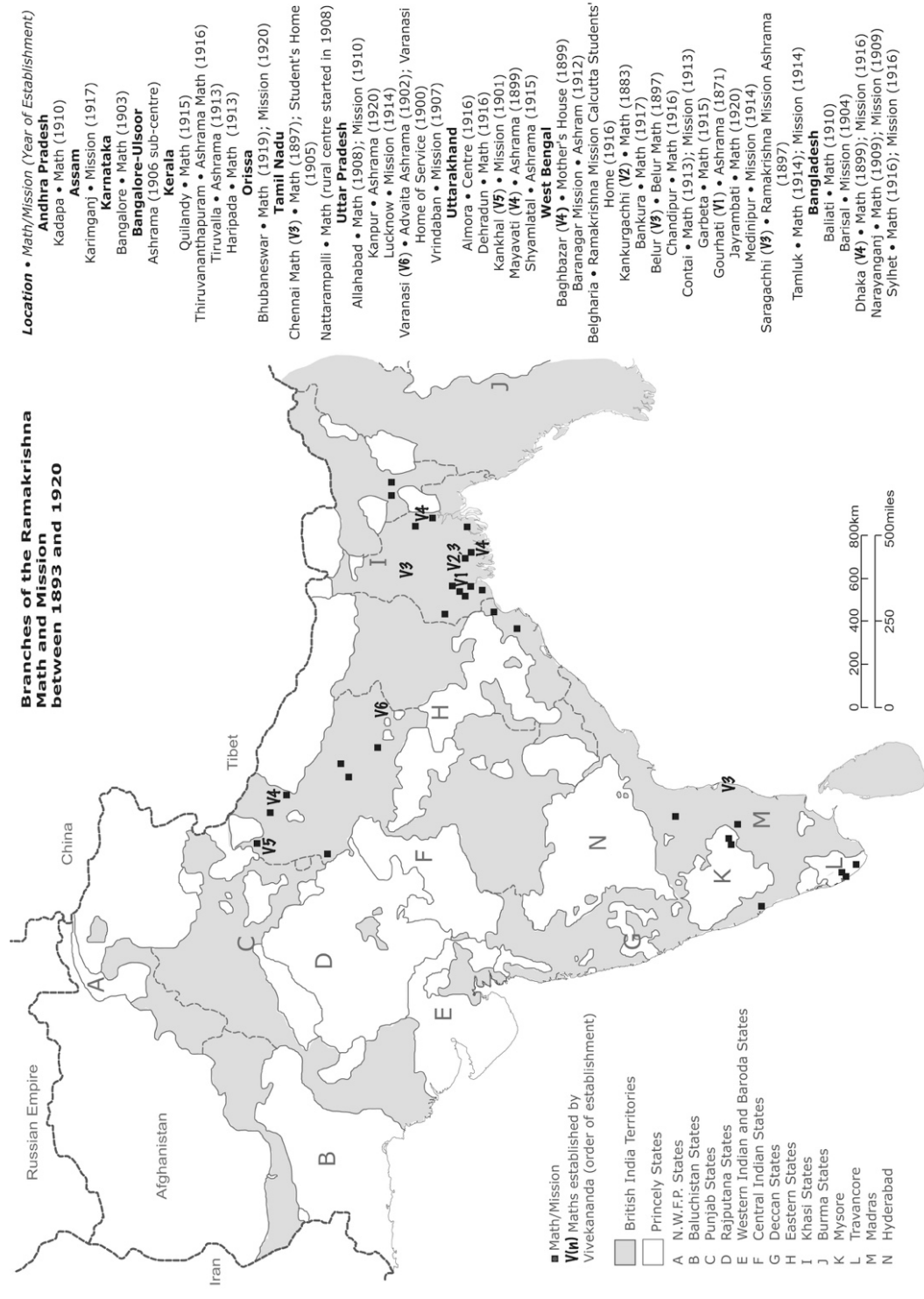
<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Vivekananda to Akhandananda, 30 June 1897, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 344.

<sup>21</sup> For the details of each location founded by a designated *sannyasi*, see Gambhirananda, *History*, 114-153.

<sup>22</sup> Vivekananda to disciples, 2 May 1895 in Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol.5 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), 62. (Henceforth, CWSV).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Addresses and Activities of the Branches’. *Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*, <http://www.belurmath.org/centres/branchcentres.htm> (accessed 17 May 2017).



Map 3. Ramakrishna Math and Mission 1897–1920.  
 ‘Addresses and Activities of the Branches’. Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.  
<http://www.belurmath.org/centres/branchcentres.htm> (accessed 17 May 2017).

1898.<sup>24</sup> With a donation of \$800 from his American supporter, Josephine MacLeod, *Udbodhan*, a Bengali fortnightly, began circulation in January 1899.<sup>25</sup> Having set up these machines of expansion, Vivekananda once again left for Britain and America in the same year, only to return a year before his death in 1901.

From the Math's inception, Vivekananda viewed his project as nationally, and at times globally, significant. Although he publicly distanced himself from politics, he saw the Math and Mission as comparable, if not superior, to the Indian National Congress.<sup>26</sup> The prime difference between the two organisations lay in their method. While both were dedicated to the national cause, one used politics, the other spirituality. For Vivekananda, only the latter could unite India.<sup>27</sup> This, he held, was because politics, by which he meant 'institutions', 'systems', 'constitutional government, and freedom, and liberty, and parliaments', was 'foreign'.<sup>28</sup> He illustrated this point by alluding to his success at the Parliament. He explained:

Gigantic organisations undertaking to subvert the whole of existing institutions in different countries and meeting with a certain amount of success have been working all over the Western world. Ask our people if they heard anything of them? Not a word. But that there was a Parliament of religions in Chicago, and that there was a Sanyasin sent over from India to that Parliament, and that he was very well received, and that since that time he has been working all over the Western countries, the poorest beggar has known.<sup>29</sup>

The news of his success at the Parliament proved that only religion could unite India as a nation, including even its 'poorest beggar'. This statement of Vivekananda on the effectiveness of religion — rather than politics — in India's nation-making reveals two related factors that underpinned his vision for the Ramakrishna Math: 'national essence' and 'expansion'. A close examination of these two themes will illustrate the inherently 'national', thus, 'political' significance of his project.

First, Vivekananda believed that at India's national core lay spirituality. Resembling the Herderian concept of the nation as *Volk*, he pointed towards religion as the backbone of

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<sup>24</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 129.

<sup>25</sup> Eastern and Western, *LSV*, vol.2, 407.

<sup>26</sup> 'The interview of the representative of India with Swami Vivekananda', cited in *The Indian Mirror*, 26 August and 27, 1897, Sankari Prasad Basu and Sunil Bihari Ghosh, (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers, 1893-1902* (Calcutta: Basu Bhattacharyya, 1969), 107.

<sup>27</sup> Annie Besant echoed his sentiment, see Arthur Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1963).

<sup>28</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*, 59.

Indian nationhood, its ‘vitality’, ‘centre’, and ‘principal note’.<sup>30</sup> Disposing of the national soul and replacing it with ‘either politics, or society, or any other’ would thus lead to the extinction of the whole race and the nation, ‘a smash all around, annihilation’.<sup>31</sup> As such, Indians had to pursue religion as both the means and ends of their actions. Politics had to be only a ‘secondary consideration’ in India.<sup>32</sup>

This overtly counter-political rendering of India’s ‘essence’ harboured, of course, anti-colonial ideas. The implications of Vivekananda’s logic are conspicuous in his letter to the Dewan of Junagad, Haridas Viharidas Desai. In it, Vivekananda blames ‘the cause of all mischief in India’ to the ‘lost individuality’.<sup>33</sup> In order to resuscitate India, he calls for ‘the orthodox Hindus [to become the] force to raise [the masses]’.<sup>34</sup> By sending this message to the Dewan, Vivekananda attempted to persuade the latter to lead the march of rescuing the Indian nation, alluded to here in the abstract figure of the ‘masses’. While this resembled the larger current of late nineteenth century Hindu nationalism, by designating ‘orthodox Hindus’ to lead the rest, Vivekananda also urged the creation of new subjectivity under a new authority.

In advising the pursuit of spirituality under a native leader, Vivekananda encouraged circumvention of the colonial state and the political sphere it had created. Rather than negotiating with the state, or obeying the contractual relationship between the sovereign and her subject, Vivekananda promoted *sannyasis* as ideal patriots. Although publicly the Ramakrishna Math and Mission emphasised its role as helping the youth ‘to lead the life of a respectable and law abiding citizens’, the Math, under Vivekananda, encouraged its *sannyasis* to cultivate a more intimate and sacred relationship with the nation, Ramakrishna, God, and to the Math.<sup>35</sup> Vivekananda’s disciples swapped the loyalty to the sovereign with sacrificial obedience to a guru and to the Order. Particularly in the initial stage of the organisation, he commanded his *gurubhais* to grow ‘the virtue of obedience’, for ‘no centralization is possible unless there is obedience to superiors’.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Id., 60.

<sup>31</sup> Id., 66.

<sup>32</sup> Id., 120.

<sup>33</sup> Vivekananda to Haridas Viharidas Desai, 19 March 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Ramakrishna Society; Anath Bhandar’, ‘Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information’. West Bengal State Archives (hereafter, WBSA), Intelligence Branch (hereafter, IB), SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908. This report was compiled regarding a new affiliated branch of the Ramakrishna Mission that worked as an orphanage and school.

<sup>36</sup> Vivekananda to S, 2 May 1895, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 224.

Even before the Math was consecrated in 1898, Vivekananda expressed his vision that the Ramakrishna Math would be distinct from other existing maths of other religious orders. ‘On no account’, he asserted in the ‘Belur Math Rules’, should the Math be ‘reduced to a Thakurbari (temple) of the Babajis.’<sup>37</sup> Instead, he imagined the Math to be a ‘future religious university’, ‘the central institution for the practice of religion and the cultivation of knowledge’.<sup>38</sup> It would provide lodging, clothing, food, and teach or train boys, householders, and sadhus. This intensive training of men, Vivekananda asserted, was more efficient than social reform, because, the official rules emphasised developing noticeably humoural and ethical tropes: ‘social evils are a sort of disease in the social body, and if that body be nourished by education and food, those evils will die out of themselves.’<sup>39</sup> In a way, Vivekananda’s organisation was to resemble a reformatory. After five years of ‘training’, the residents could either ‘return to their homes and lead the householders’ life; or, if they prefer ... take the vow of Sannyasa with the sanction of the Superiors of the Math’.<sup>40</sup> Stricter rules applied for those who chose the latter path. The *sannyasis* were required to ‘sever all family ties’, and devote to developing ‘strength of character, self-reliance, self-confidence, [and] faith in the guru and faith in the disciples’.<sup>41</sup>

Vivekananda’s vision of the Math as a residential and educational space for producing novel subjectivity — both ascetic and worldly — also reflected his obsession with territorial conquest. As he put it succinctly to Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherjee, ‘expansion is life, contraction is death’.<sup>42</sup> While scholars have interpreted Vivekananda’s evocation of sacrifice, death, and his emphasis on physical exercises as a quest for hyper-masculinity, at the crux of his project lay not so much manliness, but spatial growth.<sup>43</sup> A letter written to his disciple at the Alambazar monastery in 1894 is particularly illustrative of this point. While he called for ‘fiery young man, intelligent and brave, who [would] dare to go to the jaws of Death, and are ready to swim the ocean across’, he reminded the letter’s recipient, ‘we want hundreds like

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<sup>37</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 139. Also see Eastern and Western Disciples, *LSV*, vol. 2, 389-410.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*, 400.

<sup>39</sup> On humoural ethics, see C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 63-97.

<sup>40</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *LSV*, vol. 2, 401.

<sup>41</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 117, 136.

<sup>42</sup> Vivekananda to Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherjee, 18 November 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 172.

<sup>43</sup> See for instance, Chandrima Chakraborty, *Masculinity, Asceticism, Hinduism: Past and Present Imaginings of India* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 1973), 15, 54; Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History*, 120-149.



that, both men and women ... Make converts right and left, and put them into our purity-drilling machine'.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, for Vivekananda, the conversion of youth into *sannyasi* depended on numbers rather than gender. Even before his return to the subcontinent, Vivekananda demanded 'two thousand Sannyasins, nay ten, or even twenty thousand — men and women, both ... young educated men, not fools'.<sup>45</sup> He explicitly claimed that 'we want both men and women', arguing that 'there is no distinction of sex in the soul'.<sup>46</sup> In 1894 he instructed his Madras disciples to prioritise 'increas[ing] the organization, letting it widen and widen its circle' more than printing magazines, a project into which he had initially channelled all his resources up to 1893.<sup>47</sup>

Through such rabid conversion, he sought to reach the public at a faster rate to 'have a hold on the masses'.<sup>48</sup> Although *seva* remained at the heart of his mission, to Vivekananda, the masses also represented the spatiality of the nation.<sup>49</sup> In a previous statement on India's essence, Vivekananda had used the reception of the poor to the news of the Parliament as the proof that India's heart beat solely with religion and spirituality.<sup>50</sup> This was not only because the reception of the masses indicated the 'ground of Nationality', and 'common spirit', as one police informer interpreted, but also because the 'masses' represented the breadth of the nation's geography.<sup>51</sup> As Vivekananda urged his *gurubhai*:

We must make a sensation...let me see you make some electric circuits between Calcutta and Madras. Start centres at places, go on always making converts. Convert everyone into the monastic order, whoever seeks for it, irrespective of sex, and then I shall be in your midst. A huge spiritual tidal wave is coming.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, all his thoughts on producing brave *sannyasis* who would 'dare to go to the jaws of Death', reveal a concern with territorial conquest that transcended gender.<sup>53</sup> He insisted, 'we

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<sup>44</sup> Vivekananda to *gurubhai*, 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 101.

<sup>45</sup> Id., 102.

<sup>46</sup> Vivekananda to *gurubhai*, 1894, Id., 112.

<sup>47</sup> Vivekananda to Alasinga, 28 May 1894, Id., 108; For his prioritising of publishing and printing, see his letter to his disciples in Madras on 24 January 1894, Id., 63.; and to Alasinga, 31 August 1894, Id., 135.

<sup>48</sup> Vivekananda to Alasinga, 28 May 1894, Id., 108.

<sup>49</sup> On *seva*, see Beckerlegge, *Swami Vivekananda's Legacy of Service*.

<sup>50</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo*, 71.

<sup>51</sup> Lalit Mohan Sen, 'Confidential report re. Ramakrishna Mission', 7 July 1913, 'Ramakrishna Mission'. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>52</sup> Vivekananda to *gurubhai*, 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 101.

<sup>53</sup> Vivekananda to female disciples of Ramakrishna, 20 June 1894, Id., 113.

want thousands of men, and thousands of women, who will spread like wild fire from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the North Pole to the South Pole — all over the world.’<sup>54</sup>

As indicated by the last phrase, Vivekananda’s drive for expansion also extended beyond the subcontinent. He insisted that ‘such Maths must be founded all over the world’.<sup>55</sup> If not in physical manifestation, he predicted that ‘the spiritual force emanating from [the Belur Math] will permeate the whole world’.<sup>56</sup> Dispatching *sannyasis* abroad was to be the Math’s ‘foreign policy’.<sup>57</sup> Thus, Vivekananda presented the spirituality led by the Ramakrishna Math and Mission as another means of conducting international relations, albeit by non-state actors and ideas rather than by nation-states.

In these ways, the hub of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was to produce *sannyasis* as ‘ideal types’ — in Weberian sense — to ‘ideal citizens’ who could save the nation through spirituality and mass conversion.<sup>58</sup> These strategies revealed the importance of securing the national geography of India. Vivekananda’s letter to Sara Ole Bull captures this point. On 5 May 1897, he explained the need to buy land for his project. He wrote, ‘My idea at present is to start three centres at three capitals. These would be my normal schools, from thence I want to invade India. India is already Ramakrishna’s whether I live a few years more or not.’<sup>59</sup> As he explained in this letter, through the infrastructure of schools, by which he meant the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Vivekananda intended to physically occupy and reclaim his country. His immediate founding of new branches in Madras, New York, San Francisco, and across northern India between 1893 and 1901 signalled the beginning of his planned national (and global) conquest.

Vivekananda’s endeavour to conquer the subcontinent irritated competing social reform groups. They voiced their discontent in no uncertain terms. The monk’s popularity and his organisation’s rapid growth across northern and southern India caused many, particularly in Bombay, to demand proof of his legitimacy. Criticism of his occasional romantic mysticism and demands for the details of his new organisation grew louder throughout the late 1890s.

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<sup>54</sup> Vivekananda to *gurubhai*, 1894, Id., 112.; Savarkar also used the same metaphor of geography to declare that everyone living in the subcontinent were Hindu. The subtle difference between the two statements is worth noting. See V.D Savarkar, *The Essentials of Hindutva* (1921-2), 7. [http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials\\_of\\_hindutva.v001.pdf](http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf) (accessed 25 June 2014).

<sup>55</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 135.

<sup>56</sup> Eastern and Western, *LSV*, vol. 2, 400.

<sup>57</sup> See Gambhirananda, *History*, 120; Vivekananda, *From Colombo*, 236

<sup>58</sup> See Henry A. Finch (ed.), *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. Edward A. Shils (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1949).

<sup>59</sup> Vivekananda to Sara Ole Bull, 5 May 1897, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 334.

Strangely, these complaints ceased abruptly with Vivekananda's death in 1902. In place of the regional attacks appeared national memorisation of the monk. After his death, the many critiques of Vivekananda's 'blind' glorification of Ramakrishna, and attacks on his 'ambiguous' religious order grew muted.

### **‘Vivekananda is the word of the hour’: Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in the Public's Eyes (1894-1902)**

In its early days, the Ramakrishna Order raised many eyebrows. As Gambhirananda has pointed out, the cohabitation of the 'crazy educated youths' in Cossipore, where the Order was first located, triggered apprehension. From the outfit of the *sannyasis* to the odd structure of brotherhood in a residential area, the Ramakrishna Order was viewed by some as 'something socially objectionable'.<sup>60</sup> The neighbours, Gambhirananda narrates, feared these monks' potential to 'mislead other boys'.<sup>61</sup>

With Vivekananda's famous performance at the Parliament of the World's Religions, the monk and his religious Order gained a better reputation. However, as Chapter 3 has shown, as early as 1894, voices of suspicion against Vivekananda and discontent with his representation of Hinduism had also emerged alongside praise. Interestingly, between 1894 and 1902, attacks on the monk unfolded in regional patches and within institutional clusters.

Bombay was one region that remained resistant to Vivekananda's charm. Two years after Vivekananda's return to India in 1897, Bombay remained the only Presidency that had yet to provide an official reception for the monk. In an open letter in the *Times of India* in 1899, G. B. Vaidya publicised the minor status of the Ramakrishna Mission in his region. Dismissing the rumour that the Presidency was ready to welcome Vivekananda, Vaidya wrote, 'The Mission is very little known on this side of India, and some disciple of the Swami in Bombay would do well to publish some account of its aims and objects for the information of the general public.'<sup>62</sup> He ended the short letter with a question that accentuated how few and far between

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<sup>60</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 47.

<sup>61</sup> Id., 55.

<sup>62</sup> G.B. Vaidya, 'The Ramakrishna Mission', *The Times of India*, 28 April 1899, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 4.

Vivekananda followers were in Bombay, 'is there no one in Bombay willing to invite Swami Vivekananda to that city, and arrange for a series of lectures in September or October next?'<sup>63</sup>

S. S. Setular rose to the defence of the monk's followers in Bombay. The staunch Tilakite retorted that 'no intelligent man that I know is unaware that Swami Vivekananda went to America for the Parliament of Religion'.<sup>64</sup> He agreed that Bombay was the only Presidency that had yet to experience 'the benefit of Swami Vivekananda's visit since his return from America'.<sup>65</sup> However, the cause of this delay lay not in the unpopularity of the monk in the region, but in circumstances out of his followers' control. Some Bombay residents had attempted to arrange an invitation. However, 'the Swami's illness on the one hand and on the other the political tempest in which we have been caught for the last two years, as also the plague, came in our way.'<sup>66</sup>

While Setular insisted that Vivekananda had a following in Bombay, voices continued to question and to challenge the monk's national foothold. This was partly because Vivekananda provided vague explanations about his Math and Mission, and denounced existing social organisations, many of which prospered in the region.<sup>67</sup> To begin with, Vivekananda refused to engage with existing debates on religion and society. This was because he believed that the dominant issues with the Hindu social reform movement — caste and widow remarriage — pertained to society rather than to religion itself. He rarely spoke out on the questions of caste or the status of women. He likened the caste system to social shackles, but also praised it as an excellent structure for the division of labour.<sup>68</sup> He praised the status of widows to his American audience, while rebuking Indian men for their treatment of women.<sup>69</sup> Although he offered indecisive and vague answers on the heated debates of his time, Vivekananda often did not restrain from condemning existing social organisations. The word 'reform' in his mind was simply a reaction to western criticism. Thus, he held that his contemporary reform activists were yielding to foreign standards, offering merely ornamental

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> S.S. Setular, 'Swami Vivekananda: To the Editor of the *Times of India*', *The Times of India*, 3 May 1899, *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> The Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj both found their first (Indian) branch in Bombay. For the cosmopolitan religious scenes of Bombay, see Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> Vivekananda to Haripada, 28 December 1893, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 61; CWSV, vol.2, 372; CWSV, vol.7, 149.

<sup>69</sup> Vivekananda, *CWSV*, vol.7, 511; *CWSV*, vol. 2, 100-101.

changes. In contrast, his project promoted self-transformation through renunciation, targeting the root of the problem, and nurturing India rather than repairing or changing her.

His vitriolic criticisms and vague alternatives provoked many members in existing social reform movements. In particular, the weekly journal, the *Indian Social Reformer*, wrote of Vivekananda's ideas and activities with scathing criticisms. Founded by a contemporary of one of Vivekananda's supporters, the *Indian Social Reformer* was established in Madras in 1890 and prospered in Bombay in the fin-de-siècle.<sup>70</sup> From 1897 onwards, the journal increasingly questioned Vivekananda's fondness of Madras (as compared to those social organisations in Bengal), and it criticised his performance *contra* Mahadev Govind Ranade. Measuring his mission with the categories of 'revivalism' and 'reform', it dismissed his project as 'wearing the livery of Darwin and Spencer'.<sup>71</sup> Throughout its many publications, the paper remained sceptical and demanded to know exactly what innovations Vivekananda would bring to his country.

The questions of defining Vivekananda's contribution to India and the specifics of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, unfolded not around his celebrated performance at the Parliament, but within the frame of the nation. While praising Vivekananda's achievements in America, many articles insisted that his real work should begin in India.<sup>72</sup> One earlier piece in the *Indian Mirror* urged his admirers to rationalise their attraction to the monk. Its author wrote:

Vivekananda is the word of the hour.... Yet one or two people to whom I had been speaking and who appeared to be drunk with Vivekananda enthusiasm could tell me nothing definite of what he has done to be canonised so suddenly. There were great men before Vivekananda. But they went to their graves unwept, unhonoured, and unsung. Prove before you praise my friends, prove before you praise. ... Are we sure we understand Vivekananda right? Does Vivekananda's Hinduism admit of a caste system of sub-castes, of nautch-girls, and processions, and wooden gods, and litigious temple-trustees? And what has Vivekananda done? He has not done a stroke of work that I know of, to raise the religious conception of the masses in the country.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ramachandra Guha, 'The Independent Journal of Opinion', *The Idea of Seminar* (September 1999), accessed 30 May 2017, <http://www.india-seminar.com/1999/481/481%20guha.htm>. For more on the journal, see Neelam Srivastava, 'Reading after Terror: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and First-World Allegory', in *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*, ed. James Procter, and Gemma Robinson, Bethan Benwell (New York: Routledge, 2012), 172-178.

<sup>71</sup> *Indian Social Reformer*, 14 February 1897, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 436; *Indian Social Reformer*, 9 July 1899, Id., 456; 'Single or Married', *Indian Social Reformer*, 21 March 1904, Id., 457; 'The Indian Social Reformer', *Indian Social Reformer*, 9 December 1900, Id., 456.

<sup>72</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, February 1897, Id., 156.

<sup>73</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 11 July 1894, Id., 29-30.

Published on 11 July 1894, this article demanded to see Vivekananda's work in the country, tried to judge his validity based on his opinions on the existing national debates about Hinduism, and challenged his legitimacy compared to other 'great men'. These were common questions doubters asked about the monk. Defenders of the Brahmo Samaj often brought up his difference from other authorities on Hinduism. An article from the *Times of India* titled, 'A Modern Indian Saint', for instance, compared his writings with those of Max Müller and Keshub Chunder Sen on Ramakrishna.<sup>74</sup> It argued that rather than intellectually analysing the saint as Müller had done, Vivekananda deified his guru without any rational basis.

Another article drew more explicit comparisons between Vivekananda and another expert on Indian religion from the Bombay Presidency. Entitled, 'No Confidence in the Guru', the article compared Vivekananda with Dr. Bhandarkar of Poona.<sup>75</sup> Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar was a renowned orientalist from Western India, who had received his PhD from the University of Gottingen in 1885, and maintained a good relationship with the Brahmo Samaj. In addition, Bhandarkar had attended the International Congress of Orientalists in 1874 and 1886. The article contrasted Bhandarkar's scholarly and reformist credentials with those of Vivekananda, recounting the conversation between Vivekananda and Müller about Ramakrishna's illiteracy. In defending Ramakrishna, Vivekananda narrated the tale of a fairy gifting his guru with the knowledge of Sanskrit. In a true scholarly fashion, Müller replied, 'Nonsense! The only way to learn Sanskrit is to get a grammar and a dictionary and go to work.'<sup>76</sup> By highlighting the two men's starkly different scholarly credentials — the one's resort to reason and the other's turn to myth, the article sought to undermine Vivekananda's legitimacy as a sound voice of Hinduism. It suggested, 'it is not safe to trust utterly the guidance of the Hindu fancy, or to put great reliance upon intellects which are so little troubled by contradictions and absurdities.'<sup>77</sup>

Interestingly, these confrontational reactions to Vivekananda immediately receded with the death of the monk. After the monk's premature demise at the age of thirty-nine, regional strife faded away and one opinion triumphed — that Vivekananda was a remarkable patriot. The demand that Vivekananda's project be specified was silenced, overshadowed by his personality, which was now embraced on a national scale. Even the *Indian Social Reformer* stopped debating whether Vivekananda was an orthodox Hindu or a true reformer, and declared

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<sup>74</sup> 'A Modern Indian Saint', *The Times of India*, 28 Jan 1899, 4.

<sup>75</sup> 'No Confidence in the Guru', *New York Times*, 25 Jul 1897, 18.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

that the monk ‘spoke on behalf of neither parties but for them both’.<sup>78</sup> Citing his advice to ‘go out, expand, show life, or degrade, foster and die’, the article concluded that Vivekananda ‘had undertaken the work not of this party or that but of the nation, of nearly three hundred millions of human souls’.<sup>79</sup> His status as a widely-acknowledged patriot grew more solid each year after his death. Resurrected after death in the vanguard of anti-colonial movement, Vivekananda attracted supporters (at last) from Maharashtra as well as Madras. In death, Vivekananda finally became the word of the hour.

### Colonial Intelligence and the Ramakrishna Maths

The colonial state noticed this change of mood. One police spy wrote highlighting the Ramakrishna Math’s national appeal: ‘This Mission being the rising one, people are running towards it as most of the spiritualists meet there ... [it] gets the help and sympathy of the people of all nationality in India’.<sup>80</sup> How far was the colonial state able to gauge the nature of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and Vivekananda’s extensive reach?

In the early twentieth century, the intelligence branch placed religious organisations, including the Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj, on an ascending scale of ‘not-political’, ‘not-yet political’, ‘quasi-political’, and ‘political’.<sup>81</sup> However, regardless of which labels were pinned on different organisations, they remained in the ‘suspicious’ realm. Some reports concluded that the reform groups’ goal of ‘social regeneration’ was ‘not political’, while others deemed the groups’ interest in ‘the advancement of the country’ as potentially

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<sup>78</sup> ‘Swami Vivekananda: Revivalist or Reformer?’, *The Indian Social Reformer*, 10 August 1902, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 465.

<sup>79</sup> *Id.*, 466.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN.1078/1910.

<sup>81</sup> ‘List of Political, Quasi-Political and Religious Societies and Sabhas in the NW Frontier Province,’ 1917. SN 31/1918, FN 1742/1918; ‘List of Political and Religious Societies in Bihar, Orissa for 1917’. WBSA-IB, SN 12/1918; FN 935/1918.

‘seditious’.<sup>82</sup> Their activities ‘excited’ the public, disturbed public order, and promoted anti-government ideals.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the label, ‘political’, had an inherently flexible application.

Interestingly, the trait ‘religious’, rather than ‘religion’ per se, began to present a more nebulous and unassailable problem to the colonial state. In particular, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission’s ‘purely religious aims’ posed ‘special difficulties’ to the colonial authorities ‘in getting to the root of things’.<sup>84</sup> From 1908 onwards, Belur Math came under close police surveillance.<sup>85</sup> Several letters were intercepted, and the Math, knowingly or otherwise, harboured spies throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The Belur Math initially denied any role in revolutionary activities.<sup>86</sup> In 1911, the leading Swamis even agreed to assist the police in tracking wanted political suspects.<sup>87</sup> When the involvement of the Ramakrishna Math in ‘revolutionary murders’ and robberies could no longer be denied, in 1914 the Math put out official statements condemning the exploitation of the organisation for ‘criminal propaganda’.<sup>88</sup>

In December 1916 the Governor of Bengal, Lord Carmichael, spoke out on the Math and Mission. While praising the organisation’s work as honourable, he pointed out that because of its humanitarian work and dedication to training young men, the Math inevitably drew in ‘mean and cruel’ people, whose main objective was to ‘to corrupt the minds of young men’.<sup>89</sup> He then addressed parents that sending their children to the Ramakrishna Math and Mission ran ‘the risk of [making them into] enemies [of] their country’.<sup>90</sup> When the Math’s authorities expressed concerns about Carmichael’s statement, the Governor reassured them that he believed the organisation was ‘entirely non-political’.<sup>91</sup>

Whether the Maths really housed political criminals cannot be verified. In any case, it is irrelevant to the purposes of our current study. The more important point here is that the

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<sup>82</sup> Confidential note written by S. R. Das, 24 November 1915, “‘Books Entitled Patravali’ Part I, By Swami Vivekananda’. WBSA-IB, SN 31/1915, FN 616/1915; ‘Note on Arya Samaj’. WBSA-IB, SN 12/1910, FN 274/1910; ‘List of Political and Religious Societies in Bihar, Orissa for 1917’. WBSA-IB, SN 12/1918; FN 935/1918.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.; Confidential note, 25 April 1910, ‘Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information’. WBSA-IB, SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908.

<sup>84</sup> Makhan Lal Sen, 26 December 1915, ‘Scheme Book of the Revolutionary Society in Bengal’. WBSA-IB, SL 685/1915, FL 1280/1915.

<sup>85</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 211-221.

<sup>86</sup> Id., 211.

<sup>87</sup> Confidential note, 15 June 1911, ‘Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information’. WBSA-IB, SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908.

<sup>88</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 213-214.

<sup>89</sup> Cited in Id., 216.

<sup>90</sup> Id., 216.

<sup>91</sup> Id., 218.



Ramakrishna Math and Mission rendered the colonial scale of ‘political’ completely useless. Despite the colonial state’s mounting information on the Math, the monastery remained nebulous, formidable, and illegible to it. Both the Math and colonial authorities accepted the ‘non-political’ ideals of the organisation. After all, it committed itself to ‘honourable’ works. Nonetheless, the colonial authorities struggled to cope with the Math’s ‘entirely non-political’ status and seemingly *not quite* apolitical spaces.

Three factors lay at the vortex of confusion surrounding Vivekananda’s organisation: What I have described elsewhere as, the ‘contractive’ and ‘expansive’ space of the Ramakrishna Math, the rapidly spreading ‘doctrine of Bibekananda’, and the fact that the premises of the Math suspended time and often the identity of its residents and visitors.<sup>92</sup> First, the Ramakrishna Maths exerted a contractive force, as they attracted under one roof a motely crowd. As one policeman noted, Vivekananda’s ideas of toleration attracted ‘all sorts of differences even of castes and Nationality’, including ‘Mohammedans’.<sup>93</sup> Because the Ramakrishna Math and Mission’s ‘members chose to join it on a voluntary basis and its membership was dispersed’, ‘unlike other traditional Hindu communities and groupings’, it could not be categorised by a single identity.<sup>94</sup> Caste, regional origin, nationality, and even religion could not capture the character of its membership, and even their political proclivities remained unknown. Indeed, in the years between 1908 and 1909, Belur Math housed several ‘Madrasis’ who were ‘sufficiently remarkable to be known to the Madras Police’, while the Barisal branch admitted ‘a large number of Government servants’ as its members.<sup>95</sup> In the same period, both the Belur Math and its Puri branch also saw the arrival of American disciples, a homeopathic doctor from New York, as well as nondescript ‘American men and women’ who scurried about collecting funds.<sup>96</sup> In addition to recognisable faces, during festivals and religious ceremonies, the Maths opened their doors to the poor, further inundating their space with unclassifiable diversity.

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<sup>92</sup> Sophie-Jung Kim, ‘An International Event and Its Multiple Global Publics: The Parliament of the World’s Religions (Chicago, 1893), Vivekananda, and New Belonging’, in *Global Public: Its Power and Its Limits*, ed. Valeska Huber and Jürgen Osterhammel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>93</sup> ‘Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>94</sup> Gwilym Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission*, 71.

<sup>95</sup> Confidential note, 6 September 1913, ‘Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>96</sup> Confidential note Puri, 25 October 1916; Confidential note Bengal, 22 September 1906, ‘Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information’. WBSA-IB, SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908.

The Belur Math and its branches also demonstrated considerable expansive power. Under the leadership of Swami Brahmananda, Vivekananda's successor who strengthened the organisation's structure, the Belur Math dispatched *sannyasis* across the subcontinent to recruit more followers. As early as 1908, the Intelligence Branch made note of the very 'large number of members of the Belur Math' who 'wander[ed] about India'.<sup>97</sup> Another report to the director of criminal intelligence noted that within a year between 1913 and 1914 the Math 'initiated thousands of sadhus who are wandering all over the country inciting people to rise against the government'.<sup>98</sup>

Even without new converts, the Math's ambit continued to grow. The funds of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission increased daily, with most monies coming from America. This influx of wealth allowed the *sannyasis* to 'acquir[e] lands in different countries and [build] houses' to spread 'the doctrines of Vivekananda and thereby increasing the members'.<sup>99</sup> Between 1897 and 1920, the Maths grew at an accelerated rate (Map 3), even adding a third American branch in Boston in 1909. The multiple locations of the Math, spread across India and America, further bolstered its image as a political organisation. The intelligence files between 1911 and 1913 described the Ramakrishna Math and Mission as a 'quasi-political body' with 'its headquarters at Belur' and 'branches in different parts of the world', mainly, 'California, San Francisco, Madras, Bangalore, UP, Allahabad, Almora'.<sup>100</sup>

What worried the Intelligence Branch about the expansion of the Maths, particularly at this juncture, was the spread of 'seditious' pamphlets through the Math's network. While the revolutionary societies supposedly involved with the Math, the Anushilan Samity and Jugantar, wielded their influence mostly within Bengal, the Ramakrishna Math, the colonial authorities surmised, provided a channel for both societies to reach a wider audience. From princely states to America, the Math could circulate pamphlets and ideas through its branches.

One event, Brahmananda's visit to Madras in March 1909, raised considerable alarm. The main issue was Brahmananda's role in distributing leaflets of *Jugantar*, copies of which were sent to the Calcutta Police 'bearing postmarks of Inenpate, Pondicherry and Colombo'.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Confidential no. 1145, 4 March 1909, 'Ramakrishna Mission'. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>98</sup> Confidential note, 5 July 1908, 'Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information'. WBSA-IB, SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908.

<sup>99</sup> Confidential note, 18 February 1913, 'Particulars regarding the Rmakrishna Mission'. WBSA-IB, SN 48/1913 FN 632/1913.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Confidential no. 1145, 4 March 1909, 'Ramakrishna Mission'. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

The Deputy Inspector-General of Police suspected Brahmananda to be the culprit, given Belur Math's 'certain' association with the 'Revolutionary party in Calcutta', and its branch at 'Castle Kernan at Triplicane in Madras', where Vivekananda had stayed upon his return to India.<sup>102</sup> This conjecture, which began on 4 March 1909, ended quickly after thirteen days with the conclusion that the Madras branch of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was 'not political' and 'did not distribute *Jugantar*'.<sup>103</sup>

This short-lived investigation over the question of *Jugantar* distribution in Madras reveals to us the particular suspicions that the monk and the Math generated. The Deputy Inspector-General's letter is particularly revealing:

[Brahmananda] counts amongst his followers a large number of Government officials and men who are not desirous of joining in political agitation of any kind. A portion, however, of the Reception Committee consists of men who are anxious to take advantage of his presence to give weight to the agitation now going on. This being against the wishes of the non-political members of the Committee, accounted for the poor attendance at the railway station. Mr. Justice Mitter, the leading member of the Reception Committee, was absent, while the members of the Bande Mataram party were present in full force. Mr. Roberts of the *Statesman* was in evidence. As the train steamed into the station loud cries of 'Bande Mataram' went up. The Swami on alighting was garlanded by Babu Norendra Nath Sen and escorted to his carriage. He was driven to the house of Mr. Justice Mitter, where he was to have put up the whole of the 9<sup>th</sup>, removing to Babu Pasupati Nath Bose's from the 10<sup>th</sup>. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, it was proposed to give him a public welcome at the Town Hall.<sup>104</sup>

The letter made two important points. First, it stressed the both visible (the members of the Bande Mataram party) and invisible (Mr. Justice Mitter) followers of the Math and Mission, which further blurred the extent of the religious organisation's impact. Justice Mitter, who was not present, played an important role in arranging the reception — another matter for concern. Second, despite the mixed audience, the chanting of Bande Mataram, the active involvement of the 'Bande Mataram party' in organising the reception, and their willingness to stir further agitation indicated the need for continued vigilance. Indeed, the audience of these gatherings expected and demanded politically charged speeches. The informer noted that while the rather tame topic of Narendranath Sen's speech, delivered in Bengal on 22 September 1906, caused great disappointment amongst the crowd, his garlanding of Brahmananda amidst the cries of

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Bande Mataram intensified the atmosphere. Even without the evidence of *Jugantar* pamphlets, the political sentiment around the Math could not be ignored. Thus, neither the individual, Brahmananda, nor his public performance, nor his following could clarify the function of the Math in the eyes of the police.

Another force that made the various nodes of the Ramakrishna Maths suspect was the so-called ‘Spirit of Vivekananda’, also referred to as ‘the doctrine of Bibekananda’. As far as the colonial authorities were concerned, Vivekananda, especially after his death, wielded distinct political power, quite unlike his guru. While both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were recognised as spiritual heads of the movement, they commanded starkly different types of followers. According to a 1913 police report, although he occasionally was a figurehead in the Anusilan Samity’s recruitment drives, Ramakrishna had predominantly attracted ‘religious men [who] practice yoga and follow Jhakorr (incarnational of God) [sic.]’.<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, Vivekananda ‘showed the example of a true Patriot’, and the ‘model of Self-Sacrifice and Patriotism’.<sup>106</sup>

Many youths, particularly leading members of the Jugantar and Anusilan Samity, not least Aurobindo Ghosh, were overwhelmed by ‘a spirit of patriotism’, and found inspiration in the young monk.<sup>107</sup> Suggesting that Aurobindo’s brother, Barin Ghosh, was also first exposed to anarchism through a *sadhu*, a police document highlighted their suspicion that Hindu ascetics not only acted as the keeper of funds for arms (a rumour that circulated soon after the Alipore Bomb Case), but also as an inspiration for young revolutionaries.<sup>108</sup> One police spy reported that when ‘their leaders bec[a]me dispirited’, ‘the youths who joined the parties of the Anarchists and Nationalists’ during the Swadeshi Movement found their spiritual counterpart in the Mission and Vivekananda.<sup>109</sup> Another acknowledged that even ‘most of the leaders of the Mahrattas [sic]’ had been enlisted, and were taking ‘vows to follow and preach the doctrines of Ramakrishna and Bibekananda’.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> ‘Ramakrishna Mission Confidential Report Re. Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Confidential report, 7 March 1913, Ibid. Some of the suspected youths were: Ananda Sharun sunder Chakrabarty, Suresh Samjpal, Motilal Ghose, Makhham Sen, Mokhada Samjay, Joshi Mukerjee, Rahakumad Mukerjee, Suren Sen, Sahi Bose. Some of the known anarchists reported by the colonial investigation included: Kiron Mukerjee, Murari Nichon Phas Purna Dass, Aurobindo Ghosh, Debabrata Bose, shau Sunder Chackrabarty Paunch Cowsi Bannerjee, Jorm Thakur, Morkara Samadbya.

<sup>108</sup> ‘Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB.SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Confidential report re. Ramakrishna Mission, 7 March 1913, ‘Ramakrishna Mission’, Ibid.

‘Vivekananda’s spirit’ spread predominantly through print. After his death in 1903, Brahmananda compiled Vivekananda’s ‘Chicago lectures, his discourses with a disciple, and the words of the Master’ and published them in Hindi from the Math’s Benares branch, the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama.<sup>111</sup> In addition to the Math’s official publications, political actors also disseminated pictures and pamphlets of Vivekananda. Sundeet Amarendra Nath Chatterjee, a renowned revolutionary, popularised an almanac with photos of Vivekananda ‘among the Punjabi, Marhattas, Madrasis and others’.<sup>112</sup> The almanac quickly gained avid readership, and faced a demand for ‘a thousand more copies’ from Rawalpindi.<sup>113</sup> Punjab and Rajputana also welcomed the ‘doctrine of Bibekananda’, albeit to a lesser extent than Madras.<sup>114</sup> As the report concluded, within a decade of his death, ‘the Spirit of Vivekananda ha[d] begun to act [all over] India’.<sup>115</sup>

By 1915, Vivekananda’s messages also had begun to appear in more aggressively anti-colonial pamphlets. A Bengali pamphlet titled ‘The Scheme Book’ of an unnamed Samity seized by the Calcutta police revealed traces of Vivekananda in its message. Using Vivekananda’s framework and vocabulary, the pamphlet shifted the target of their action. While the living Vivekananda had blamed ‘India’s mischief’ on the self, this pamphlet pointed the finger at the British for ‘all the shackles with which [India] has been bound’.<sup>116</sup> It asserted that without ‘meddling with the English’, all of India’s ‘individuality as a nation’ would be forever lost.<sup>117</sup> Following Vivekananda’s principle that politics in India did ‘not mean any work ... but only religion’, the pamphlet encouraged its readers to ‘join hands with the Ramakrishna Mission’, if not as ascetics then to ‘confer occasionally’.<sup>118</sup> Thus, the same vocabulary — national individuality, rejection of politics — took on a conspicuously anti-colonial meaning, and rendered the Ramakrishna Mission an important ally of anticolonial endeavours.

The combination of ‘contractive’ and ‘expansive’ spaces of the Maths and the so-called ‘Spirit of Vivekananda’ that spread through these networks cast a heavy cloud of suspicion on the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Despite its official declaration as a ‘non-political’ organisation, the Maths remained illegible to the colonial state. This, then, led the Intelligence

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<sup>111</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 157.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Ramakrishna Mission Confidential Report Re. Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Scheme Book of the Revolutionary Society in Bengal’. WBSA-IB, SL 685/1915, FL 1280/1915.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

Branch to draw contradictory conclusions about it. The superintendent of the Intelligence Branch stated in 1913 that despite the ‘purely religious and philanthropic’ and ‘genuine’ aims of the institution’, ‘anyone who will come out as leader of these spiritualists will lead the whole body of anarchists and then these anarchists will be an organised body.’<sup>119</sup> The question of the Belur Math’s role ‘as a revolutionary agency under the guise of religion and philanthropy’ remained open.<sup>120</sup>

The Math’s premises, whether in New York or Madras, further drove the paranoia in the colonial state. From the state’s point of view, these spaces harboured considerable potential for sedition, which could break out at any point in time at one place, or simultaneously across several branches.

### **The Ramakrishna Maths as a Space of Suspension**

At the end of January 1911, nine years after Vivekananda’s death, a large crowd gathered at Belur Math to commemorate Vivekananda’s forty-ninth birth anniversary. From 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm, the Math saw six hundred ‘respectable people, mostly from Calcutta’ as well as ‘beggars and other low class people of about the same number’.<sup>121</sup> An observer noted that ‘twenty Mahratta and Madrassi youths [sic]’ mingled in the assembly, while ‘some American ladies and a young gentleman named Francis John Alexander’ stood by the Swamis.<sup>122</sup>

According to the police observer, the highlight of the event was neither the rituals of feeding the poor nor the speeches made by the Swamis. Rather, it was the recalling of Vivekananda through performances. After Alexander spoke about Vivekananda’s reception in the West, two young boys recited the monk’s speeches and poems. Both boys, aged fourteen and eight, did not simply read out Vivekananda’s words, they also tried to bring him to life by imitating his mannerisms. These boys were two of many who trained at the Math and housed in the rooms where pictures of Vivekananda decorated the walls.<sup>123</sup> After this, according to the

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<sup>119</sup> Confidential note, 6 September 1913, Id.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> ‘The 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vivekananda Swami at Belur Math’, para.508, ‘Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. On iconography of Vivekananda, see Gwilym Beckerlegge, ‘Svāmī Vivekānanda’s Iconic Presence and Conventions of Nineteenth-Century Photographic Portraiture’, *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 12:1 (2008), 1–40.

spy, an ‘inmate of the Math’, thirty-year-old Tejnarain Bramacharya, declared his decision to travel to America ‘to preach the religion of Swami Vivekananda’.<sup>124</sup> The audience greeted this news with applause.

Vivekananda thus came to life at the Math. He was an inspiration as well as a tangible guide to routes of travel and bodily practice. His reappearance through these young boys’ enactment also rendered the space of the Math rather eerie. Indeed, this occasion showed that Belur Math presented a formidable and mysterious threat to the colonial state. It was much more than a sanctuary for revolutionaries. In its role as a reformatory, it also served as a purgatory that suspended time and identities.<sup>125</sup> The space of the Math, in other words, perpetuated a lingering anticipation of an imminent outbreak of anti-government violence, that left the colonial authorities in permanent state of anxiety.



Image 17. ‘Thieves’ by Babu Gaganendranath Tagore in *Modern Review*.<sup>126</sup>

Colonial authorities were particularly concerned with two groups of people at the Math – former criminal suspects and youths. As maths were ‘both makers and breakers of status’, the police, who located suspects of the Alipore Bomb Case and the Khoona Conspiracy Case at

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> For more on temporal anxiety, see Wagner, “‘Treading Upon Fires’”.

<sup>126</sup> *The Modern Review* XXII:3 (1917), 0.

the Belur Math, expressed confusion of the suspects' changed personalities.<sup>127</sup> One report noted that the acquitted accused of the Alipore Bomb Case, Kunja Lal Saha, had displayed a remarkable change in his demeanour. Now an ascetic, Saha displayed 'polite' manners.<sup>128</sup> Kanai Lal Ghosal, one of the 'suspects', as the report referred to these figures, 'dressed like a sadhu with a blanket around his shoulders'.<sup>129</sup> Tarapada Bose, the Khulna volunteer, in a similar garb, and lingered around Sachin Sen and Debabrata Bose, the 'inmates of the Math'.<sup>130</sup> While some suspects' conspicuous transformation in their appearance perplexed the colonial authorities, others' participation in the Math's activities of *seva* also blurred their political status. Though not dressed in *sannyasi* clothes, Rash Behari Bose and the renowned medical scientist Upendranath Brahmachari returned together to the Math from Ghatal relief. Seeing their new self-fashioning, the police wondered whether 'these men who have joined the mission still harbour[ed] anarchical views or not'.<sup>131</sup>

These suspects' commingling with a group of boys further disturbed the police.<sup>132</sup> A previous report had confirmed that Shasunder Chackrabarty and Lekat Hussain interviewed 'both Mohammedan and Hindoo' youths to create a band of volunteers.<sup>133</sup> With the expenses met by 'the political leaders who have joined the Ramakrishna Math and Mission', these young volunteers, most of whom clad in 'the garbs of Sannyasins', awaited to be dispatched by 'batches to different places of Bengal'.<sup>134</sup> In this case, the words 'dispatch', 'spread', and 'volunteer' combined with 'youth' denoted not just spatial expansion of the potentially political *sannyasis*, but also temporal uncertainties. The police worried about the youths' absorption of the seed of anarchism, which could erupt into violence at any point. The Math in these ways made time nebulous; anarchism was always in prospect.

Other places affiliated to the Math also had these liminal qualities. The office of the Bengali monthly journal *Udbodhan* was one such space. Although the journal largely addressed religious topics, it generated suspicion for 'ordinarily deal[ing] with political issues'.<sup>135</sup> Debabrata Bose's leadership in the office further raised its potential involvement in

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<sup>127</sup> C.J. Baker, and D.A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940* (New Delhi: Macmillan Company of India, 1975), 72.

<sup>128</sup> Confidential no. 1568, 15 April 1911, 'Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information'. WBSA-IB, SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908.

<sup>129</sup> 'Ramakrishna Mission'. WBSA-IB. SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.



revolutionary movement. Bose also used the physical premises of the office, which was a floor below Sarada Devi's residence, to his advantage. He constantly moved in between the journal's office and the Math to avoid a scheduled interview with a police officer, claiming to have 'miss[ed] the CP officer by chance'.<sup>136</sup> The boys, who enacted Vivekananda's Chicago performance at the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary, were affiliated with the Udbodhan Office as well. Their routine training to master imitating Vivekananda often occurred at the office. Thus, the Udbodhan Office, as the Bengali mouthpiece of the Math, suspended the identity of those it accommodated. It was a transitional space for young boys to grow into Vivekananda, and high-profile suspects to hide under the guise of spreading spiritual knowledge.

The branches in America also attracted similar suspicion. To begin with, in the map of Vivekananda's project, America and Britain were two critical locations. America represented his chief source of funding, what Vivekananda termed 'practical matters', and Britain became his final destination to 'conquer the conquerors' through ideas.<sup>137</sup> Although he rarely expressed anti-colonial sentiments against Britain, he frequently emphasised the importance of America. As early as 1897, he urged his Calcutta audience to express gratitude to 'the other nation on the other side of the Atlantic' for the hospitality he experienced throughout his sojourn.<sup>138</sup>

Furthermore, in the ways he envisioned his project, one might argue that America and India emerged on the same platform of importance. He established his first institution in New York, and sent his salary from lecturing to his disciples in Madras to start his first journal, the *Brahmavadin*. The execution of his long-held goal of building the Math also relied on his western supporters. Vivekananda purchased the land for the Belur Math with Henrietta Mueller's donation of Rs. 39,000 under the name of Sara Ole Bull.<sup>139</sup> He explicitly designated the 'West' as the fountain of funds for his mission in India, as he wrote to Sarala Ghoshal, the editor of *Bharati*, on two separate occasions, 'I only want to show that our well-being is impossible without men and money coming from the West ... the money required for these works would have to come from the West.'<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Confidential no. 1568, 15 April 1911, 'Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information'. WBSA-IB, SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908.

<sup>137</sup> This idea of 'practicality' appears frequently in his correspondence throughout his life. See Vivekananda to Sara Ole Bull, 5 May 1897, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 334; 'The Interview of the Representative of India with Swami Vivekananda', *The Indian Mirror*, 26, 27 August 1896, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 106.

<sup>138</sup> Vivekananda, *From Colombo to Almora*, 229-230.

<sup>139</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 189; Vivekananda to Sara Ole Bull, 24 January 1895, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 208.

<sup>140</sup> Vivekananda to Shrimati Sarala Ghoshal, 6, 24 April 1897, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 325, 331.

If America took charge of financial issues, India had to lead in the matters of organisation. In India, he urged his disciples to prioritise organisation for spirituality, whether in the forms of a magazine, school, or a Math. An article in the *Times of India* reflected this, ‘there exists a special need just now for sending a small colony of Hindoos to America. Swami Vivekananda is thought to require help — not so much in money as in men.’<sup>141</sup> More importantly, Vivekananda insisted that the two aspects had to be exchanged. With a firm belief in ‘the law’ of ‘give and take’, he wrote to Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherjee, ‘if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth’, and, ‘be ready to receive what others have to give her’.<sup>142</sup>

The cooperation between India and America continued after Vivekananda’s death. The Vedanta Society in New York prospered, opening new branches in San Francisco and Boston, unlike the movement in Britain which quickly withered away soon after Vivekananda left the country in 1896. Because of the overlap of the Math’s locations with that of transnational anti-colonial movement and publication of political pamphlets, the Vedanta Society immediately attracted the attention of the police.<sup>143</sup> Again, the police report on the Vedanta Society tried to define its affiliates on the scales of ‘political’ and ‘non-political’. This time, however, the colonial state managed to punish one solitary suspect.

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<sup>141</sup> ‘Current Events’, *Times of India*, 6 March 1895, Basu (eds.), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, 5.

<sup>142</sup> Vivekananda to Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherjee, 18 November 1894, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 171, 172.

<sup>143</sup> See for instance, James Campbell Ker, *Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1917), 197-199.

## Coping with the Transnational Space in the Interwar Period

The colonial state's suspicions against the Vedanta Society in New York dated back to Vivekananda's earliest travels there. The Thagi and Dacoiti Department tracked Vivekananda's movement. The Department also followed Swami Akhandananda, who departed to America to oversee the Vedanta Society after Vivekananda's return to India.<sup>144</sup> Even after Vivekananda's death, the Math's transnational cooperation continued, and so did surveillance over it. The intelligence report on the Ramakrishna Mission between 1908 and 1913 noted that the *sannyasis* valued 'co-operating with other Independent Foreign Nations'.<sup>145</sup> In 1908, one file reported that the Vedanta Society in New York favoured journals such as the *Gaelic American*, which — to the eyes of the Raj — 'portrayed the [Indian] political situation poorly'.<sup>146</sup> Based on this previous record, another file from 1910 proposed that the Ramakrishna Math endeavoured to 'acquaint the world with India's needs', more specifically, 'the political needs of the people of India' through creating philosophical affinity between Americans and Indians.<sup>147</sup>

If the colonial state's suspicion before 1917 was around the possibility of the *sannyasis* 'arousing of, what Leela Gandhi has termed, 'affective cosmopolitanism' through spirituality, with the surge of transnational anti-colonial movements, namely the Khilafat movement and the Ghadhar movement, the Intelligence Branch began to worry about minutest details of the Math's international affiliates.<sup>148</sup> The locations of San Francisco and New York, where Vivekananda started two foreign branches of the Ramakrishna Math, did not help to soothe colonial nerves. Both cities had been involved in the Ghadhar Movement and the Hindu-German Conspiracy. One file related to the Vedanta Society between 1917 and 1927 revealed the extent of the colonial state's heightened anxiety and insecurity about its control over the subcontinent during the interwar period. Unlike the Maths in India, the Vedanta Society suspended not just the political proclivities of an individual, or the imminence of sedition, but

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<sup>144</sup> Letters from the Thagi and Dacoiti Department, India, 27 June 1896 to 14 August 1896, 'Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information', WBSA-IB, SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908.

<sup>145</sup> Confidential note on the Ramakrishna Mission, 'Ramakrishna Mission Belur, Howrah, Miscellaneous Information'. WBSA-IB, SN OB/VII, FN 9/1908.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Confidential report, 7 March 1913, 'Ramakrishna Mission'. WBSA-IB, SN 41/1910, FN 1078/1910.

<sup>148</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 17.

it also raised questions about race, citizenship, and gender in ways the state found difficult to comprehend, let alone police.

First opened during the First World War, the file listed three subjects of investigation — Josephine MacLeod, Sister Christine, and the German influence on the Ramakrishna Mission.<sup>149</sup> Other renowned ‘enemies of the state’, such as Annie Besant, Bhupendranath Dutt, and C.K. Chakravarty were also included. A specific incident brought these individuals together under one investigation: Sister Christine’s request to re-enter India after her medical visit to the United States.

Sister Christine, or Christine Greenstidel (1866-1930), was a German-born American citizen based in Detroit. One of Vivekananda’s early western disciples, Greenstidel had moved to Calcutta after years of working for Vivekananda’s Vedanta Society. Even after his death, she had continued to work for his mission and for Sister Nivedita’s girls’ school in Calcutta. Due to an illness, she had returned to America in April 1914, expecting to return to India the following year. However, despite her request to travel in 1917, she was detained in America for a decade.

The main cause for this was the newly imposed compulsory regulation of passports. While border control by passport checks tightened in Europe and America during World War I, Government of India only ‘issued a notification in March 1917 under Defence of India rules, making a passport compulsory for entry and exit into India by sea’.<sup>150</sup> Due to the War, and the increasing transnational cooperation targeting the British Empire, ‘suspicions about spying extended to women’, and ‘GOI demanded an entry on nationality status by birth as well’.<sup>151</sup>

Indeed, according to the intelligence file, the two main factors that prevented Greenstidel from returning to India were her nationality by birth and her potential exposure to political activists. With the outbreak of the War, ‘her German parentage, in spite of her being a nationalised citizen of USA, made it impossible for her to return’.<sup>152</sup> The Director of Criminal Intelligence in India, Charles Cleveland, postulated that her exposure to ‘revolutionary elements’ in America made her a danger to India and ‘expressed the view that the lady should

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<sup>149</sup> ‘Reports on Miss Josephine MacLeod, Sister Christine, German Influence in the Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 105/17, FN 1670/17.

<sup>150</sup> Radhika Singha, ‘The Great War and a “Proper” Passport for the Colony: Border-Crossing in British India, C. 1882-1922’, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 50 (2013), 292.

<sup>151</sup> *Id.*, 305.

<sup>152</sup> ‘Reports on Miss Josephine MacLeod, Sister Christine, German Influence in the Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 105/17, FN 1670/17.

not be allowed to return to India even after the war, although [there was] nothing at all on record against her in the office [of the Intelligence Branch]'.<sup>153</sup>

Another lay disciple of Vivekananda, Josephine MacLeod, whom the general director of police described as 'one of those American ladies who are infatuated with the Vedanta doctrines', provided testimony in her support to the government in 1917.<sup>154</sup> She assured that 'though German by extraction', Greenstidel was 'absolutely American in her sympathies', and was not aware of the 'arrests in America of any Germans or Indians for conspiracy'.<sup>155</sup> MacLeod resolutely insisted that 'politics have been expressly repudiated by the Ramakrishna Mission'.<sup>156</sup> She also proved her own innocence by bringing her social network to the surface. She obtained the permit to sail to England through American consul, went to India with Patrick Geddes and his wife, all invited by Lord Pentland, the governor of Madras.<sup>157</sup> The Intelligence Branch also noted her kinship with the Countess of Sandwich.

Reflecting on MacLeod's testimony, the police in 1917 confirmed that Greenstidel was neither political nor related to the German Section of Indian Revolutionaries. Nonetheless, the intelligence authorities remained sceptical, and prevented her re-entry into India. She waited for seven years, finally returning to the subcontinent in 1924. Four years later, she once again journeyed to America for medical reasons. From 22 February to 18 March 1928, before her departure, Greenstidel wrote to the director general of police, J. E. Armstrong. She explained that she would have to return to India to complete her book projects, and expressed her concern regarding the 'greatest difficulty' she had from the British passport officer a decade before. Six months later, on 28 September 1928, Armstrong wrote to F. J. Lowman, the acting director general of the Bengal police, confirming that 'there has been nothing against her politically'.<sup>158</sup> In spite of this, he left the decision open, writing, 'but this is for you to decide'.<sup>159</sup> Greenstidel died in New York two years later.

Ultimately, despite the official label 'not-political', the issues of her race, combined with her affiliations with the Vedanta Society in New York, prevented Greenstidel's return to India. The Intelligence Branch brought into the case two specific people with ties to Germany and the Vedanta Society — Bhupendranath Dutt and C. K. Chakravarty. As soon as the War

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<sup>153</sup> Cited in confidential letter written by Charles Cleveland to J.E. Armstrong, 5 March 1928, Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Confidential letter, 13 July 1917, Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Confidential letter, 23 June 1917, Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Confidential letter, 13 July 1917, Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Confidential letter written by J.E. Armstrong to F.J. Lowman, 28 September 1928, Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

broke out, the younger brother of Vivekananda and a renowned Bengali revolutionary, Dutt ‘immediately offered his services to the German Embassy at Washington’.<sup>160</sup> From there, he made his way to Germany, where he acted as ‘a prominent and trusted member of the committee of seditious Indians attached to the Berlin Foreign Office’.<sup>161</sup> The police report suspected that Dutt had installed Chakravarty to lead the German-Indian schemes in America in his absence. This was because Dutt’s correspondence address led to Chakravarty, and when Greenstidel could not obtain a passport in June 1916, the Indian Committee in Berlin and Chakravarty went to Detroit in September of the same year to lend a hand to Greenstidel. Furthermore, the intelligence file noted that Chakravarty frequented the Vedanta Society in New York and maintained a close tie with Swami Bodhananda, with whom Greenstidel also had a relationship. Given this coincidence of German ties, the physical space of the society automatically incriminated those affiliated with it. Indeed, Greenstidel’s association with the Society heightened police suspicion against her, if not more, then in equal measure as her German nationality. Her German race could be overlooked given her staunch ‘American sympathies’. On the other hand, her association with the Vedanta Society could not be brushed aside. One section of the intelligence report illustrated this chain of guilt by association around the Vedanta Society. It read:

It is worthy of note that all prominent *American* members of the V. S. in N.Y. (eg. Mrs. Warren alias Kamali Devi) are pro-German in their sentiments. Swami Bodhnand himself [sic], if he has not taken an active part in political agitation, has always been on the best of terms with the prominent Indian revolutionaries who happen to be in New York... He was connected with the German-Indian schemes and at the time of C.K.C.’s arrest, he was negotiating with him for the use of purposes of the Vedanta Society meetings of a portion of a house which Chakravarty was renting with German funds. Though it cannot be positively asserted there is yet a strong suspicion that he has been using Vedantism as a cloak for Indian revolutionary propaganda.<sup>162</sup>

The space of the Vedanta Society dedicated to promoting Vedantism in America now emerged as a hub of illicit friendships between a seemingly non-political swami and political suspects, as well as between pro-German Americans and anti-colonial Indians. Despite these claims, the Inspector General noted that the Vedantists eschewed political matters, and clarified that he could not guarantee any connection between the Society and the German-Indian Conspiracy.

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<sup>160</sup> ‘Bhupendranath Datt’, Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

Immersed in its own ‘strong suspicion’, the intelligence authorities took note of even the minutest detail and most tenuous connections between Greenstidel, her affiliates, and their acquaintances. Another figure, A. M. Montagu, a follower of Theosophy and Vedantism, with ‘several German friends’ also offered her assistance to Greenstidel.<sup>163</sup> Upon learning this, E. B. Bishop wrote on 12 March 1916 to add a further reason to prohibit Greenstidel from entering the subcontinent. Given Montagu’s close association with Germans, ‘educated Hindu’ male friends in California, and Annie Besant, who by then was ‘known as an ‘agitator’, Bishop asserted that Montagu ‘was a faddist influenced by German Association, and poisoned against her own country’.<sup>164</sup>



Image 18. Christine Greenstidel<sup>165</sup>

Even a benign article in the *Modern Review* attracted police attention. Published on 17 September 1917, at the height of Greenstidel’s attempts to return to India, an article that praised her missionary spirit appeared in the journal. Titled, ‘A Detroit woman and her work in India’, it simply likened her ‘unusually sympathetic and spiritual voice’ to that of Tagore and Lajpat Rai.<sup>166</sup> Despite its harmless message, the police remained alert, recalling a similar tactic deployed by another journal to help ‘two important members’ of the ‘Hindusthan Association’

<sup>163</sup> ‘C.K. Chakravarty’, Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Censor Confidential letter written by E.B. Bishop, 12 March 1916, Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> ‘Sister Christine’, Frank Parlato Jr., *Vivekananda.net*, <http://www.vivekananda.net/pplheknew/svdisciples/Images/SisterChristine.jpg> (accessed 18 September 2015).

<sup>166</sup> *The Modern Review* XXII:3 (1917), 278.

in securing their ‘passports to return to India’.<sup>167</sup> Thus, in the eyes of the colonial state, Greenstidel’s German race, her location, and American affiliations all rendered her dangerous, in spite of her confirmed ‘non-political’ status.

The Greenstidel file also opened up the question of gender as it surrounded the Ramakrishna Maths. Although not stated explicitly as a factor, gender appeared in two different sections, both confined to space, as an important element to note. First, in the above letter from Armstrong to Lowman which declared Greenstidel’s innocence, the former ended his letter insinuating his persisting doubts about Greenstidel’s circle of influence. Using a religious metaphor, he described the scene of the Calcutta residence of Nivedita and Greenstidel:

The house of the sisters was a meeting place of the great men of India. As Jesus loved to spend hours of rest in the house of Mary and Martha in Bethania, so the masters in India delighted in the hospitality of the sisters in Bose Para lane, Baghbazar. There would come members of council and leaders in the public affairs of Bengal; Indian artists, men of letters, men of science, orators, teachers, journalists and students. R. Tagore, Lajput Rai, Dr. J. C Bose... were among the visitors.<sup>168</sup>

The point of somewhat prurient surprise for the investigator lay in the diversity of the various men attracted to the location rather than the obvious gender dynamic within the confined space of the sisters’ house. In a way, Greenstidel’s home seemed to exert similar contractive forces as the Math itself. It drew in people of various backgrounds, vocations, and nationalities — the quality that made the police concerned about the Belur Math and its branches.<sup>169</sup> Interestingly, while drawing a variety of men, unlike the Math, a space dominated by male *sannyasi*, the sisters’ house on Bose Para Lane did not seem to exert expansive force. None of the comments referred to the house spreading ideas or dispatching missionaries. Whatever interactions that occurred in the house, the file concluded, remained contained within its premises.

A similarly skewed spatial-gendered observation appeared in another remark in the file on Greenstidel. This time, it was about a larger geography. It noted:

The interesting point of comparison appears to be that in America Revolutionary teaching and Vivekananda is used as a means for inveighing *young* women, while here revolutionary teaching and Vivekananda is used as

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<sup>167</sup> ‘Reports on Miss Josephine MacLeod, Sister Christine, German Influence in the Ramakrishna Mission’. WBSA-IB, SN 105/17, FN 1670/17.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> It should be noted that Okakura Tanzen, the Japanese art historian-cum-philosopher and Rabindranath Tagore also met through Nivedita. See Heehs, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism: Essays in Modern Indian History* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 68-95.



a means for inveighing young men to commit dacoities and hand over the proceeds to the organisers.<sup>170</sup>

If Vivekananda designated America as a source of finance and India as the base of spiritual organisation, this report divided America as a land of Vivekananda's female followers and India as a land of his male followers. Qualities of spirituality and wealth were manifested in gendered geographies, and these two spaces remained segregated. Indeed, as the case of the Vedanta Society and the colonial authorities' reluctance to grant Greenstidel's entrance show, while the gendered geography appeared 'interesting', the meeting of western female and Indian male followers of Vivekananda in either ground rang alarm bells. In both remarks on gender, the female ambit was confined to the location of residence in Baghbazar or a foreign, distant land of America. Greenstidel's re-entering India could open doors for her to come into contact with seditious Indian men, which could cause hitherto unseen concerns for the Intelligence Branch. Thus, Greenstidel had to be detained in America.

Two historical factors can offer us plausible explanations for the colonial authorities' intense discomfort with Greenstidel. First, the idea of female terrorist did not gain currency until the 1920s. Although women did emerge in police surveillance, especially during the War, the active search for female volunteers or actors of terrorism within India did not take off with much force before the 1920s.<sup>171</sup> A file from 1930 traced contemporary activists to the year 1926, which saw '3000 women' that fit the description.<sup>172</sup>

Second, the participation of western female spiritualists in Indian nationalist movement often came in tandem with their public distancing from spiritual organisations. Annie Besant explicitly claimed that her political opinion had no connection with the Theosophical Society. Nivedita, who harboured revolutionary leanings and cultivated active relationship with both nationalists and anarchists, publicly severed her ties with the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, before she began to expound on aggressive Hindu nationalism. In Nivedita's case, her official detachment from the space of the Math symbolised the turning point of her politicisation from her purely spiritual days. She declared her new status soon after Vivekananda's death and immediately began to publish her thoughts on anti-colonial nationalism. In order to secure its reputation as purely spiritual, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission also publicised its rift with

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<sup>170</sup> 'Ramakrishna Mission letter from Swami Abhenanda, CA. USA to Swami Prananda R. M. Belur, intercepted by the censor'. WBSA-IB, SN 110/1917, FN 856/1917. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>171</sup> 'Recruitment of Females for the Formation of a Woman's Revolutionary Party'. WBSA-IB, SN 93/1919, FN 223/19.

<sup>172</sup> Confidential note, 10 November 1930, Ibid.

Nivedita.<sup>173</sup> Therefore, these two women had to separate themselves from the space of spirituality to claim and earn their political label.

Greenstidel was different. She claimed to be, and had earned the ‘not-political’ label. Yet, her racial link to Germany, her national link to America, her ties with the Vedanta Society, and her gender incarcerated her in the zone of constant suspicion. Fearing that one woman could trigger something beyond their capacity to control, the colonial authorities kept her out of the subcontinent.

Greenstidel’s case reveals the degree of colonial state’s anxiety about the Ramakrishna Math and Vivekananda’s spirituality in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The intelligence file itself highlights that one woman of spirituality could instigate a series of lengthy discussions about the nature of the Ramakrishna Math, its American hub, association by guilt, the larger geography of the Math’s transnational network, and gender. In the period when the colonial state entered a heightened level of threat, Greenstidel remained confined to her nation by citizenship, trapped in a suspended temporality awaiting her return to Bengal. The once trusted disciple of Vivekananda became the only victim of the state’s long-standing suspicions about the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

## Conclusion

*[The general belief was that] until now in the history of India, no religious reform was seen to flourish in such short time and hope the RKM will unite all Hindu Religions.*  
-Confidential report on the Ramakrishna Math and Mission<sup>174</sup>

The police file on the Ramakrishna Math and Mission examined in this chapter was filled with contradictory conjunctions, ‘yet’, ‘but’, and the phrase, ‘of uncertainty’. At a time when the colonial state faced anti-colonial upsurges and increasing international hostility, ‘spirituality’ and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission presented further challenges. Colonial authorities struggled to understand the movements of *sannyasis* and their identities. Nor did the police trust information and ‘facts’ its own agents had gathered. Unlike in other incidents, when the unknown location of anticipated outbreak set off fear, in this case a specific location triggered constant, gnawing anxiety.<sup>175</sup> The *sannyasis* no longer simply represented elusive

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<sup>173</sup> Gambhirananda, *History*, 211.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> See Wagner, “‘Treading Upon Fires’”, 160-162.

‘intermeddlers’.<sup>176</sup> The anarchist spirit of earlier revolutionaries who lived in the Math, haunted their seemingly ascetic bodies. The malleable identity of western women could only be grappled with by holding onto the tether of nationality, and trapping them into the borders of their legal homes. Alternatively, only dissociation from the space of the Math could ascertain one’s political identity.

This state of confusion was instigated by the ‘Spirit of Vivekananda’, which the colonial state could sense, but not grasp. Even one of Vivekananda’s staunch followers, Aurobindo, could not identify the appeal of Vivekananda’s spirit. He explained, it was ‘still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, unheaving that has entered the soul of India’.<sup>177</sup> Purple-prose aside, Vivekananda had really ‘spread over the whole of India’, and, as he had predicted, his ‘very bones’ were ‘working miracles’.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Id., 186.

<sup>177</sup> S.N. Sen, *History of the Freedom Movement in India (1857-1947)* (New Delhi: New Age International, 2003), 23.

<sup>178</sup> Vivekananda to Akhandananda, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1897, Vivekananda, *Letters*, 344.

# CONCLUSION

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*History is not an account of “change over time”, as the cliché goes, but rather, change through space.*

Philip J. Ethington<sup>1</sup>

This thesis has told the story of Vivekananda through space, situating him in the many international, national, regional, and local contexts he occupied, and upon which he put his imprint. It followed him through his networks that linked Bengal with Madras, the Maharaja of Khetri with the ‘Mylapore clique’, and his Bengali *gurubhais* with his Madras lay devotees.<sup>2</sup> It saw him as a moving body through space and time — as a *parivrājak*, an object of princely patronage, and even as a spectre that haunted the colonial state. By departing from the existing approaches to Vivekananda — which mainly place him in the context of religion, nineteenth century Bengal, and political thought — the thesis has, in fact, shed new light on these very issues.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 exposed the rifts and tensions beneath the veils of spirituality. Rather than seeing spirituality as a supranational pursuit of the fin-de-siècle that led to ‘imperial encounters’ à la Van der Veer, or a romantic discourse that bridged the East and West à la Gandhi, the first three chapters revealed how the practical issues of representation, legitimacy, and territoriality drove apart organisations and individuals with overlapping values. Notably, Vivekananda and Henry Olcott’s bitter battle over Madras, and the question of who spoke for Hinduism, as discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, indicated that ‘spirituality’ was as much driven by politics and competition as other pursuits. Furthermore, the vague idea of ‘spirituality’ did not always produce affective cosmopolitans grounded in ‘ethico-political practice’.<sup>3</sup> At times, it attracted a transatlantic bourgeoisie who simply desired an additional experience of social

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<sup>1</sup> Philip J. Ethington, ‘Placing the Past: “Groundwork” for a Spatial Theory of History’, *Rethinking History* 11: 4 (2007), 466.

<sup>2</sup> On ‘Mylapore clique’, see C.J. Baker, and D.A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940* (New Delhi: Macmillan Company of India, 1975), 50-3; Also see David A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras Presidency, 1870-1920* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 17.

belonging that took them beyond their given gender and nationality. Other times, more specifically during the interwar period, being ‘spiritual’ became a dangerous pastime, albeit more for some than others.

The thesis has also tried to pave new ways of thinking about political Hinduism. If Jyotirmaya Sharma’s project was a reaction to the trope of the benign otherworldly Hindu, this thesis introduced other ‘political’ aspects of Vivekananda besides his vacillating social ideas. Vivekananda deployed wide-ranging registers and this added to his appeal to a diverse crowd. Narendranath became Vivekananda through royal patronage of *khilat* and the shared rhetoric of ‘old patriotism’. At the Parliament, Vivekananda provoked apprehension among Christian men, as he instigated a wholly disordered spectacle of undisciplined white female comportment. To his co-religionists in India, his ambiguous affiliation and emerging legitimacy, which gained him the title of the ‘authentic Hindu’ in the West, was a cause of considerable annoyance. Curiously, it was only after his death that Vivekananda’s independence from specific localities or reform organisations allowed him to gain national celebrity. His critics ceased to question his motives and began to memorialise him. His pervasive ‘spirit’ drew in people of various backgrounds to the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. This, in turn, rendered both organisations susceptible to colonial surveillance for two decades after his death.

By examining these extensive and diverse planes on which Vivekananda operated, the thesis also has offered new insight into the monk’s life, his enablers, and their milieus. Using Vivekananda’s *parivrājaka* phase as a spatial lens, the first chapter argued that Vivekananda used the identity of a *parivrājaka* not (or not only) as a route to spiritual growth, but to build his authority among his *gurubhais* by assembling royal patronage. He also sought to reclaim Madras from the Theosophical Society. This argument sheds new light on the role of *thakurs* and rajas of smaller Indian States. Despite their small size (or weakness in the case of Mysore), the princes of Khetri, Ramnad, and Mysore wielded authority in the realm of religion. Their patronage transferred Vivekananda from Limbdi to Travancore, and eventually from Ramnad to Chicago.

As Vivekananda crossed the *kalapani* to attend the Parliament of the World’s Religions with the help of these princes, the story of his princely patrons must also be taken beyond the subcontinent. Just as the Gaekwad of Baroda circumvented the colonial state to construct the Indian Pavilion, the quasi-sovereigns of smaller estates extended their ambit to the international platform by sending Vivekananda to the Parliament of the World’s Religions. Analysing the issue of representation in space, the second chapter also revealed the multiple, and often subtle ways in which sovereignty was claimed and subverted at these international gatherings. In so

doing, it urges historians to widen the scope of their understanding of ‘internationalism’. Internationalism for colonial India was not merely a means of triangulating the binary of the colonised and coloniser. Beyond the framework of realpolitik, in the realm of religion and festivals, Indian princes and representatives participated in internationalism at the heart of the empire, using the very colonial ‘apparatus of representation’, which, according to Timothy Mitchell, constructed colonial and modern ways of governance.<sup>4</sup>

Chapter 3 zoned in on the discursive space of universalism at the Parliament and revealed multiple, and sometimes conflicting, landscapes of brotherhood. *Contra* Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné, the Parliament’s fraternity, as constructed by the event’s chairman John Henry Barrows and the Indian delegates, excluded ‘Asia’ and Britain. However, the veneers of transnational alliances were too weak to withstand their fragmented nature. Immediately after the Parliament, the contentions over Hinduism in India and the rhetoric of Christian superiority rose to a crescendo. The Parliament, this thesis shows, also introduced new disputes as well as new malleable forms of belonging. A former American ambassador presented himself as a Muslim speaking on behalf of his Southeast Asian patrons. A French immigrant to America claimed herself as a Hindu, ‘initiated’ under Vivekananda. Thus, the chapter demonstrated that the Parliament was not merely a reflection of Christian and American imperialism, or the precursor of Pan-Asian collaboration. Under its disordered universalism, people could, and often did, paint unusual supranational affiliations, even if only for a time.

Similarly, by looking at the relationship between space and spectacle, Chapter 4 challenged the view that the Empire projected order and control through international exhibitions, as argued by many museologists, including Peter Hoffenberg, Tony Bennett, and Timothy Mitchell. Instead, the chapter showed that international expositions illustrated the colonial will to order, which was often not realised. The grand size of the British Section belied the British Royal Commission’s struggle to negotiate and occupy space. Thus, instead of the ‘order-representation-meaning’ paradigm that constitutes Mitchell’s influential argument of ‘world-as-exhibitions’, I argue that what was actually going on reflected the imperial fear of losing control. By the same token, the disorder that Vivekananda triggered presented a remarkable episode of subverting and confiscating colonial power.

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Mitchell, ‘Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,’ in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), 290.

Chapter 5 uncovered the challenges Vivekananda faced within India after his success at the Parliament. In contrast to the popular myth, Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission became the objects of scathing criticism after the triumph at Chicago. Social reformers attacked them, especially in Bombay. The colonial state remained suspicious of them. In the twentieth century, as the Math expanded, colonial anxiety about what was going on within these networks and how, intensified year after year. As the last section of the final chapter demonstrated, it only took one woman to expose the states' fear of the Math, and its claims to ungendered spirituality.

In generating a more multi-dimensional portrait of Vivekananda, the thesis hopes to have introduced new ways of writing transnational and global history, including global intellectual history. In addition to scales — whether national, regional, or global — and bridges or networks of geographies, the thesis has demonstrated the importance of examining *layers* and multiple dimensions of space — whether the effects of spectacle, or the contractive qualities of certain events and institutions. Doing so allows us to create a lens through which we can observe the implications of the ideas of highly controversial and mobile figures. Indeed, rather than trying to confine Vivekananda within the paradigm of the nation, particularly given contemporary appropriations of the historical figure, the approach demonstrated by the thesis can generate a deeper understanding of figures who thrived in liminality, and their disproportionate historical impact.

It goes without saying that the thesis has many limitations. In terms of research, access to the Theosophical Society's main archive, which was under construction during my fieldwork in 2014-2015 and deployment of regional archives, including the files on Khetri and Ramnad, would have broadened the base of source materials on which the first two chapters rest. These shortcomings, fortunately, can be amended with further research in India.

The story of Vivekananda's becoming will continue to be contested. Nonetheless, I hope this thesis has sharpened our picture of Vivekananda and his journey to the front of our frame. Although, as Sumit Sarkar has argued, Vivekananda, the anti-colonial Hindu nationalist, is long gone, buried in history, the multiple spaces and political registers he invoked during his lifetime remain a useful guide in understanding the persistent imprint of his spirit on contemporary India, and on the places and people he mobilised.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 353.

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